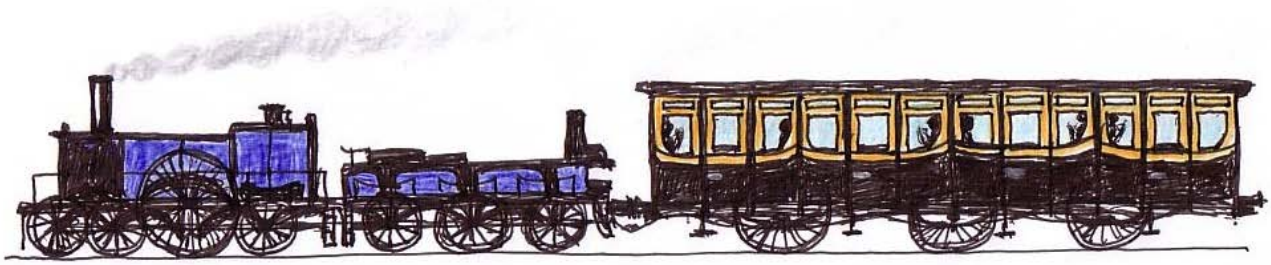
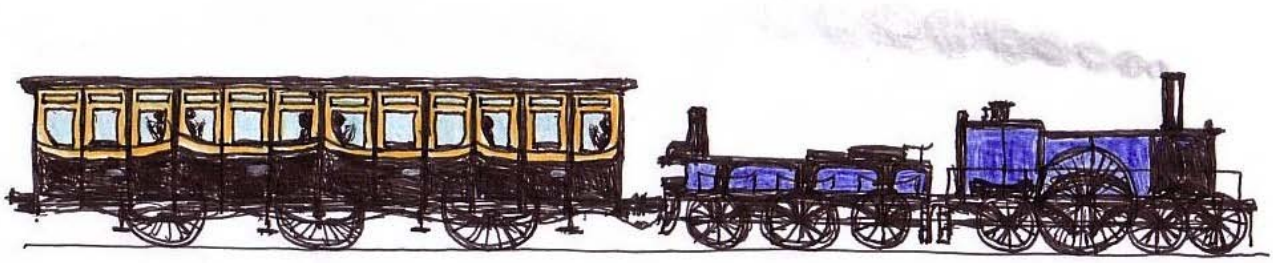


The Journals of Mr Sugar Face and Mr Gastric Juice

written by them during a journey to the South Coast of England in 1851 together with recollections of North Wales, 1850



George Webb Medley (1826-98)
alias
Sugar Face and Gastric Juice

Edited and annotated by Nigel Webb

The Journals
Of
Mr Sugar Face
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Preface

George Webb Medley

The Journals of Mr Sugar Face and Mr Gastric Juice were written by a 25-year-old London stockbroker, George Webb Medley (1826–1898) in 1851, during the course of a holiday on the South Coast, mainly in Devon, Dorset and Hampshire. He was accompanied, for most of the time, by his sister Amelia, also known as Minnie.

Mr Sugar Face and Mr Gastric Juice represent two aspects of George's personality, the former demonstrating his optimistic and positive inclinations; the latter his pessimistic and negative side.

Later, he appended his recollections of a visit to North Wales the previous year and, in this, in which he writes simply as himself, he sounds, most of the time, much the same as Mr Sugar Face. However, on one occasion, when there is a train to be caught and he is uncertain of the time, he becomes almost irrationally anxious and takes on the tone of Mr Gastric Juice.

He also wrote another diary (publication in preparation) covering a trip to the continent with two friends in 1853.

The names of Medley's deputy-diarist characters follow a long tradition which includes, from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress ...* (1678), Mr Great-Heart, Mr Feeble-Mind, Mr Valiant-For-Truth and Mr Worldly Wiseman, or, more contemporarily, Captain Miserimus Doleful in Surtees's *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities* (1831-4).

George was born in Hackney in 1826, son of George Bowley Medley (1802-60), a stockbroker, and Hester, née Webb, who came from Jamaica. Hester's father, John Racker Webb, who farmed in Jamaica, had owned 345 stock and 143 slaves[1] in 1820; he could not be married to Hester's mother, Mary Wint, because she was a free quadroon (i.e. a quarter black). In the same year, Mary owned, in her own right, 31 stock and 64 slaves.

With Hester's father retiring in 1828 on account of poor health, George Bowley Medley and Hester moved out to Jamaica, taking the two-year-old George Webb Medley with them. John Racker Webb died in 1829 and, by 1831, a year of slave rebellions in the island, George Bowley Medley found himself the owner of over 200 slaves and 186 stock. The couple had a second son, John, in 1828, soon after arrival in the island, a daughter, Julia, in 1830, another daughter, Amelia, in 1831 and another son, Henry, in 1833, but both Julia and Henry died in infancy.

The bill for the abolition of slavery became effective in August 1834 and all slaves were then classed as apprentices; slaves received their unrestricted freedom on August 1st, 1838. Exactly how George Bowley Medley coped with the turmoil in the sugar market and in land prices we do not know, but doubtless his understanding of bear markets as a stockbroker will have helped him: we find him the owner of 1943 acres in 1840. He was also a Justice of the Peace and Assistant Judge in the Court of Common Pleas in the parish of Manchester, Jamaica, a manager of the Manchester Bank of Savings and an Ensign with the Militia.

But, by 1841, the family were back in England, living in Lambeth, having sold up in Jamaica. George Bowley Medley became a Lloyd's underwriter but, sadly, Hester died in 1849 at the age of 45.

George Bowley Medley

Hester Medley, née Webb

George Webb Medley was fourteen on return from Jamaica. He was then educated at Willesden House Classical School, Kensington, a small establishment catering for 'a select number of young gentlemen' and 'conducted by a member of the University of Cambridge', at a cost of 10 gns a year.[2] He seems not to have attended university, which must have disappointed his grandfather, Samuel Medley (1769-1857), who

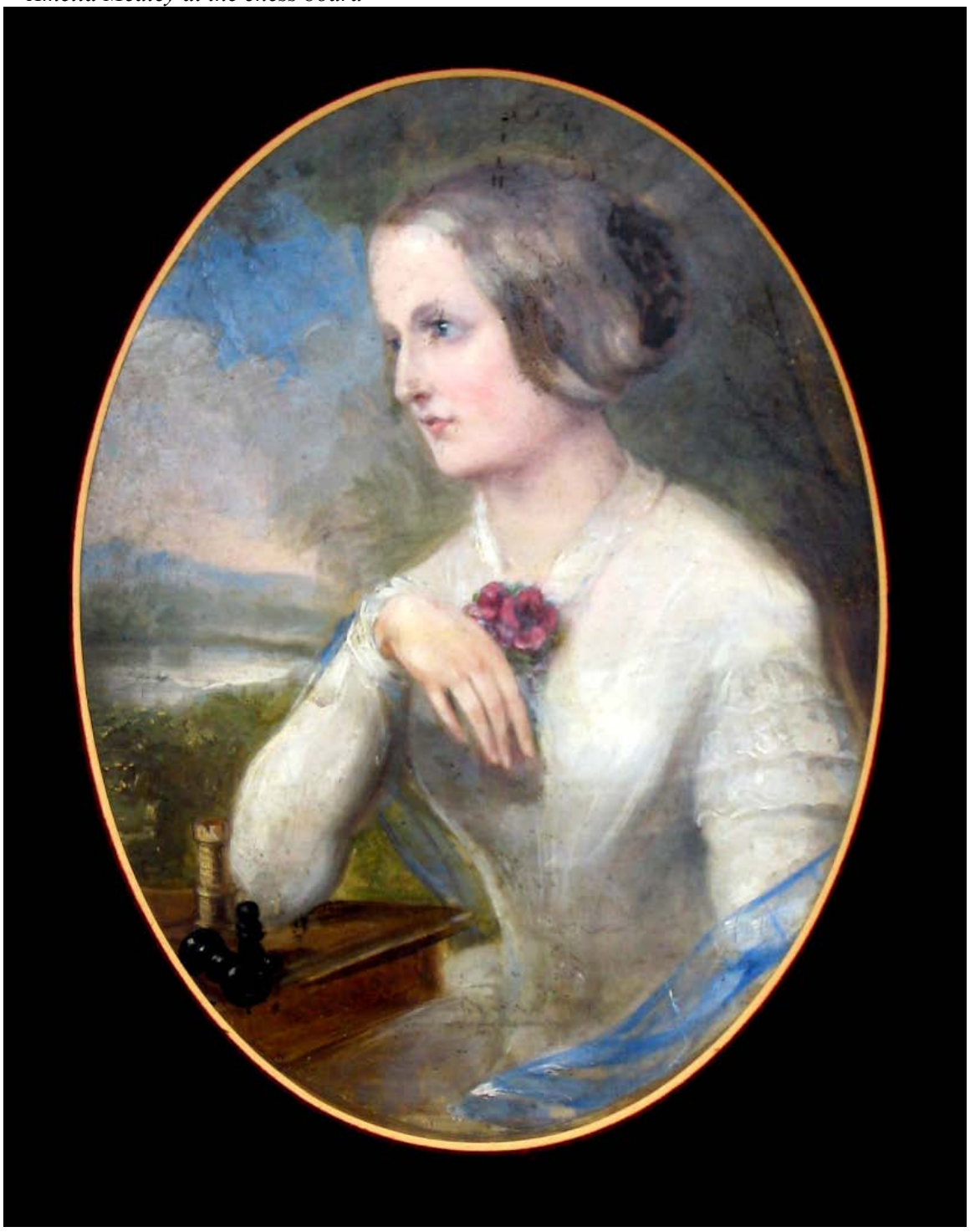
[1] These data and others similar quoted elsewhere are from Jamaica Almanacs and Directories, etc., available on www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com

[2] from an advertisement in *The Times*, 20.1.1843.

played a part in the founding of University College, London. Perhaps he and his brother and sister had a tutor at some stage; in any case, he was, as we shall see, very well educated.

Their education evidently included learning to play chess. Amelia is portrayed at the chess board in a painting of her as a young woman and both George and John were no mean players: in 1849, when they were respectively 23 and 21, they were joint runners up in the knockout competition at Simpson's Grand Divan Tavern, in the Strand, then the home of chess in England – a competition which, by 1851, had international standing.

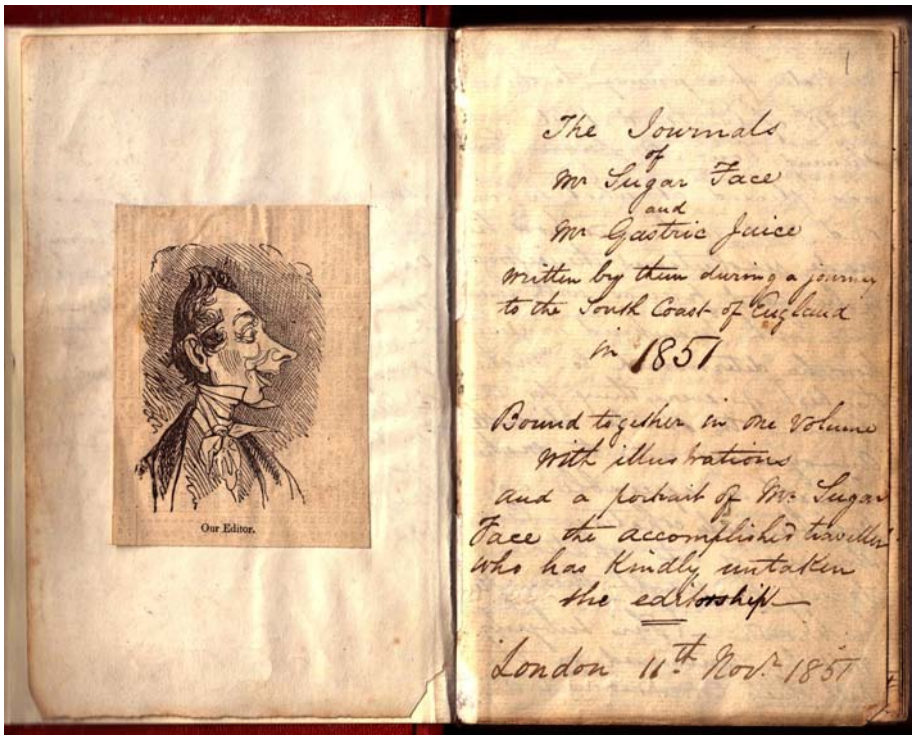
Amelia Medley at the chess board



By the time of the 1851 census, George was a member of the Stock Exchange, describing himself as a 'dealer in railway shares', with his younger brother, John Racker Medley, as his 'clerk'.

We shall continue their story later, in a Postscript.

Introduction



Following the title page of George Webb Medley's journal, there is some advice to the reader:

Anyone who may perchance cast his eyes over the following pages is advised to read one day's journal of Mr Sugar Face and then the corresponding day's journal of Mr Gastric Juice, and then he will be able to compare the different views they take of the same objects.

The present editor has followed this advice to a large extent, although sometimes taking less than a complete day at a time, and has added in his own comments. He has also been a little selective in his choice of passages to present to the reader and has made the odd change to grammar, punctuation and even a word here and there. The original text was extra-illustrated with prints, probably collected during the holiday: these have been reproduced along with a few others. The portraits and photographs in the preface and postscript are in the collection of the present editor, who is a great great grandson of George's sister Amelia.

Mr Sugar Face introduces his version of events as follows:

Notes of a journey to the South of England in 1851 shewing how Mr Sugar Face was pleased at what he saw and met with, and how he made resolutions thenceforward to be good friends with himself and with mankind in general; how he determined to make the best of everything for the future, to smile at little annoyances and to make himself as agreeable as possible, under whatever circumstances or into whatever society he might thereafter be thrown. ...

Mr Gastric Juice, on the other hand, makes the following claim:

… Mr Gastric Juice will give us <u>his</u> views of society and <u>his</u> account of what took place, not slurred over with the gloss that tourists and travellers are apt to cast over their sentimental trash. He goes out determined to be pleased with nobody and nothing. He is not going into hypocritical raptures at fine scenery and romantic rubbish. He goes out to pacify his bile, not to come home again and prate nonsense about what he doesn't care one straw about and doesn't understand. Not he! Pshaw! He hates everything and everybody. It is his deliberate opinion that society is one huge humbug.

Chapter 1

In which Mr Sugar Face, Mr Gastric Juice and Amelia visit their Uncle and Aunt in Bristol and see the largest ship in the world.

When the journal starts, George, Amelia and their brother John were living at 48, Highbury Park North, with their father. Since their mother had died two years previously, there was also a living-in housekeeper, Mrs Susan Haysay (?), aged 52, described by George, in the character of Mr Sugar Face, as 'Nurse', and a servant, Susan Grainger:

22nd October 1851

Woken at 7 a.m. by that faithful old creature Nurse. How comfortable it is to feel, going to bed overnight, that you need take no thought for the morrow, but sleep on until her gentle summons awakens you to the duties & the pleasures of the day – & it was with me particularly this morning for I went to bed late and should not have arisen in time to make the journey had not she performed her welcome task.

My thoughts (as they invariably do) flew to the subject uppermost in my mind at the time – my journey. How delightful it will be to get away for a short time from the cares and anxieties of everyday life and be refreshed in body and mind by change of air and scene and occupation. Such an opportunity as this is one of those pleasant spots, those oases in the desert of time that cheer the spirit on its onward march. We (that is my dear sister and myself – in her company I hope to spend a delightful time – a pleasant and intelligent companion on a journey is an inestimable treasure) set off to Bristol by the 9.00 express train with wonderful punctuality, only four minutes behind time! This is one of those miracles of modern science that make me proud of the age we live in.

Mr Gastric Juice, however, sees things in a different light:

7 o'clock in the morning – confound that old woman, she always comes bothering and waking me up just as I get into a nice nap or am in the middle of a pleasant dream. It is always so – drat her – with her voice squeaking like a penny trumpet – and twice as piercing it is too. She has got a way of worrying you to get up, she has. She talks and talks and asks questions which you must answer. Just what she did this morning. "Neow Meeaster Geearge you 'ad better git up, you wont be in time for the railway you wont, so get up do" &c.

Felt miserable as I got up; here I was, got to go I don't know how many hundred miles, and for what I should like to know? Because other people do the same I suppose. So you can say you have been there, and have seen that – seen the world. You're nobody unless you do travel. Better to stop at home and mind your business; keep your money in your pocket. What d'ye expect to see? There's Snooks – what good has travelling done him? He has been half over Europe in six weeks, comes home, talks of Switzerland and glaciers – eyes bleared by snow, skin burnt off by sun – how he went up the Rhine, fancies himself learned in the wines. Comes back through France, visits Paris, brings a musical box or some such trumpery and returns home and deludes himself into the idea that he has made a tour. Pshaw!

Got to the train at last which didn't start punctually of course. When did it ever? What do directors care for life and limb? What have they got to do with passengers I should like to know – except to receive their money and occasionally crush a limb or two just to shew what they can do? Care, indeed – haven't they got enough to do to attend to their dividends without looking after you? What if the train <u>is</u> a quarter of an hour behind time? Put on a little extra steam – that's all – fire away. No matter if there <u>is</u> a train before. Let 'em get out of the way. What if there <u>is</u> a smash? Pick up the pieces, that's all. Seven and twenty dead bodies – jury – inquest. Verdict – accidental death, fault of the stoker, no doubt, who was found jammed under the hot boiler; why didn't he jump off and simply break his neck as the driver did, sensible fellow? Well all's over, soon forgotten. Go on again. Another smash &c. &c. – Pshaw!

Such cynicism may not be entirely a pose for the sake of the character of Mr Gastric Juice. George Webb Medley, a dealer in railway shares, was doubtless well informed about the safety of travel by rail and must certainly have had well-informed views about the level of moral responsibility assumed by railway company directors.

The Great Western Railway's London to Bristol line had opened only ten years earlier, in 1841, at a cost of £6,000,000[3], and a Wiltshire clergyman took his parish clerk to watch one of the first trains pass, probably near the Wootton Bassett incline:

'Presently our ears were assailed by the gruff snort of the engine as it laboured up the severest and sharpest gradient on the whole line to London. As soon as it attained to the highest point strange palpitating throbs burst from the throat of the chimney, preceded by the shrill scream of the whistle, followed by a frenzied w-h-i-s-h and then an impetuous rush down the incline at sixty miles an hour. The novelty of the sight, the strangeness of the sounds, the marvellous velocity with which engine, tender, carriages, and trucks disappeared, the dense columns of sulphurous smoke, were altogether too much for the reason of my simple dominie, and he fell prostrate on the bank-side as if he had been smitten by a thunderbolt! When he had recovered his feet, his brain still reeled, his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he stood aghast, unutterable amazement stamped upon his face. It must have been quite five minutes before he could speak, and when he did it was in the tone of a Jeremiah. 'Well, Sir, that was a sight to have seen; but one I never care to see again! How much longer shall knowledge be allowed to go on increasing?'[4]

Even by 1851, there was fear, unjustified as far as passengers were concerned, of death from explosions of steam at high pressure. There was certainly risk of fire 'intensified by use of gas for lighting in carriages and cooking in dining-cars', and 'it was not until the 1890s that an effective system of communication between passengers and train crews was in general acceptance'[5]. But 'the likelihood of death or injury to a traveller by train was' (estimated to be) 'very much less than to one who went by coach'[6]. Coach travel, indeed, carried all sorts of risks. A coach might overturn, for instance when a horse shied or ran away, or a wheel came off, or an axle broke – and there was always the possibility of highwaymen. In winter, there was no possibility of heating and, in March 1812, two outside passengers actually died of exposure.[7] Whatever the risks of travel by rail, Mr Sugar Face makes the best of his journey to Bristol:

There, in a first class carriage, with the News of the World before me, I luxuriated as if in the easy chair of a well furnished library. The hour's run to Didcot, without stopping, was delightful – our fellow passengers looked pleased with themselves and the world – I am sure I was. No doubt there is a great deal in the aspect of countenances and they have a mutual influence over each other which is sure to be developed as they come in contact one with the other. Who has not noticed how one jolly good humoured face entering a circle that seemed as hard frozen as Nova Zembla[8] has thawed the icicles that bound them in monosyllabic converse and warmed them into genial conversation? On the other hand does not a bad tempered man cast a gloom wherever he pokes in his unwelcome face and renders not only himself but others miserable? Mem.: "Sugar Face", my dear fellow, "always be cheerful and good tempered and you will get through life easily respected and beloved" – but I must not moralise.

Now to my fellow passengers. Minnie and I were the only two who sat on our side of the carriage which holds 4 on each seat – 8 in all. Consequently I had a good view of our vis-a-vis – the nearest the window was a middle aged man, rather fat and comfortable looking. The next was a young man with a countenance rather pleasing,'ingenui vultus puer'.[9] No doubt an Oxonian, as he got out at the station

[3] Simmons, J. & Biddle, G. (Ed.): *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, OUP, London, 1997.
[4] Simmons, J.: *The Victorian Railway*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1991, pp.14-15, quoting Young, J.C.: *Memoir of Charles Mayne Young*, Macmillan, London, 1871.
[5] Simmons, J.: *op. cit*., p.17.
[6] Ibid, p.17, quoting Francis, J.: *A history of the English railway: its social relations & revelations 1820-1845*, London, 1851.
[7] Sparkes, I.: *Stagecoaches & carriages*, Spurbooks, Bourne End, Bucks, 1975, pp.56-64.
[8] Three large islands in the Arctic Ocean, then belonging to the Russian Government of Archangel; now Novaya Zemlya, between the Barents Sea and Karskoye More, part of the Russian Federation.
[9] i.e. a boy of ingenuous countenance. (*Ingenui vultus puer ingenuique pudoris* - Juvenal.)

nearest there. He was intently occupied upon a book before him – most probably he was studying hard and wished to lose no time. The remaining couple were I don't know who or what – perhaps brother and sister, were you to judge from the terms of familiarity upon which they seemed to be. All this I noticed when I had finished my Daily News and politely offered it to my elderly friend who, with a smile of urbanity, handed me his Times. This is one of those amenities of railroad society which renders modern travel so delightful. Mem.: "Sugar Face, never take the Times into a railway carriage – there are sure to be one or two at least inside and an interchange of civility is always pleasant". As to the others, our studious friend did not require a newspaper and our 'couple' were plentifully supplied for their journey with various publications.

Mr Gastric Juice, though, finds the whole journey thoroughly miserable and takes the opportunity to air some of his prejudices and obsessions:

Got into the carriage – seats with back to the engine all occupied of course – always was so – never otherwise. Travelled a hundred times – sure to be someone there before you – some fat round-faced smiling brute, who looks at you with such a smile of complacency, or some ugly looking greatcoat shoved into the seat to keep the place. Cuss 'em – always have a good mind to kick 'em out – afraid of consequences, that's all.

Saw how it was directly I got in: big brute nearest the window, greatcoat next, whose owner soon came in – youth, wishy washy sort of a face, book in his hand – some trumpery novel I suppose, by the way he devoured it. Disgusted with them both – they looked so happy and comfortable. Hate happy people. I like a downright good savage brute – that I do – none of your milksops, for me. There was that man the other day – hung his wife with a cord over the door after giving her a good larupping with it. He was a man of some spirit, he was; then that other fellow, beat his son to death, almost, with a red hot poker – the young varmint – no doubt he deserved it. That's life in London, that is. They want to educate the lower classes, they say – asked me to subscribe – kicked the man down three flights of stairs – subscribe indeed! Pshaw!

Let me see. Where did I leave off? Oh! I know – young Namby Pamby – Oxford I suppose. Just so, old story – allowed £100 a year, spends £500 – tell that in a minute by the look of his jib – that fellow study at Oxford? I'd be bound he knows more about Cockfighting than Tacitus! Pshaw!

Ten there were. Two more – man & woman, married I should think by the indifference with which they regarded one another. Can always tell – man attentive, woman cross in consequence. Never was married – don't wish to be. Look at your married folks, connubial bliss, domestic felicity. Pshaw! What shams we all are, what masks we wear. Who is here I should like to know hasn't got his or her company face and manners? It's positively frightful I'm told to see the change in the countenances of some of those "meek (she) bears and affable (she) wolves"[10] when they've got that helpless animal a husband by himself.

Well there we were. Old fool opposite got a paper – the Times of course. Never got into a carriage yet without seeing some old driveller with the Times. Went down to Brighton once, bought a Chronicle – paper that nobody reads; sure to be plenty of others. So it was. Everybody takes out his paper for himself – reads it through. Very little in the paper. One looks up. Another looks up: "What have you got?" "Times!" "And you?" "Times"! Bless my heart so it is. Positively five people, all bought the Times. Idiots! How I did enjoy the joke – ready to burst almost. Read my paper through and through three times over from 'First ship that sailed to Bombay' to the name of the printer at the end. Pleasantest journey I ever took – did me a deal of good. Made five people miserable for two hours with vexation & envy. You should have seen how they all got their wretched Times to exchange when they thought I'd done. Then to see their disappointment – three times over. I could have positively yelled with delight.

Let me see where was I? Ah! Man and wife – just so – they had a newspaper, Chamber's journal and last week's Punch. They'd do anything rather than talk to each other. They have enough of that I'd warrant. Old fool opposite read his paper through then offered it to Amelia. That's what he calls politeness I suppose – just so – way of the world. When a thing's of no use to you, you give it away –

[10] a slight mis-quote of words from Shakespeare: *Timon of Athens*, Act 3, scene 6.

and that's charity. Old fool didn't know what to do – looked out of window, then at me – confound him – me indeed! With that smile of his – he wanted my paper of course, selfish brute. I had the Daily News – slashing paper that cuts up the Pope, Philpotts[11] and other firebrands in fine style. That's why I like to read it. Well – when I'd quite done I shoved it over to the old porpoise who gave me his in return with a bow. Hypocrite! With his pretended politeness all put on no doubt. What is he at home I should like to know? Beats his wife most probably (fool enough of course to have a wife) and starves his apprentice – there's no telling. Pshaw! I could have pounded him in a mortar.

In the Daily News for that day, which both Sugar Face and Gastric Juice say they have read, the particular article which *'cuts up the Pope'* is headed 'THE POPE'S NEW GUILLOTINE' and is a sarcastic report of its erection and use, by Pius IX, on a builder named Pettinelli, 'accused of having killed … some persons believed to be Jesuits in disguise'. Apparently Pettinelli was given plenty of time, prior to execution, to repent of his sins – 'a touching proof of the infinite gentleness of the church and of the value she has for the salvation of the souls rescued by the blood of Christ' – but went to his death without ceasing blaspheming and insulting the church and its ministers and protesting his innocence!

The News of the World, which Sugar Face claims to have been reading too, was also an eight-page broadsheet, but published weekly. It included a report of the final closure of the Great Exhibition the previous Wednesday, on the subject of which The Times[12] noted: 'One can scarcely comprehend the strength of that confidence in the law and in the security of property which reconciles 15000 exhibitors gathered from every civilised country in the world, speaking different languages and brought up under different forms of government, to trust the most valued evidence of their skill, their wealth and their enterprise, night after night, to a band of about 50 policemen, paid little above the ordinary wage of labour and armed against danger from without with no weapon more formidable than a baton'.

So busy have they been reading newspapers, neither Sugar Face nor Gastric Juice have noticed any of the scenery between London and Bristol apparently! They would have left from the relatively unimpressive 'old' Paddington station – Brunel's new one was not completed until 1854. George Measom, in the 1860 edition of his guide[13], writes: 'Before … the first mile is accomplished we shall have reached the green fields, and a distant view of Hampstead and Hendon. … South of the line, New Kensington and Notting Hill are seen: elegant and modern suburbs, where nearly a thousand acres of green fields have been covered with streets, terraces and roads lined with detached villas; not to forget several handsome churches, all erected within the last twenty years'. Later, the journey would have taken them over Brunel's wonderful bridge at Maidenhead, 'erected at an expense of £20,000'[14] with its two spans of 128 ft.

After Reading, 'as far as Pangbourne, the line of the railway is, for the most part, in close proximity to the river. The scenery is most picturesque.'[15] They would have passed through 'a sequence of splendid portals' (to tunnels) ' … ranging from Romanesque to Gothic at the western end to classical nobility at Middle Hill and Box', then making the 'quiet approach to Bath from the east through Sydney Gardens' before coming into the Gothic splendour of Brunel's Bristol station[16].

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[11] '…the autumn of 1850 was a moment of intense uneasiness and distrust throughout England. On September 24, 1850, Pius IX. issued his Bull, 'Ad perpetuam rei memoriam', constituting England an ecclesiastical province of the Roman Catholic Communion, with an archbishop and twelve suffragans. This 'Papal aggression', coupled with the secessions to Rome which were constantly occurring, roused the public mind to a fever of excitement, and made even cool-headed people almost fanatical. The public indignation was stimulated by incitements to popular prejudice against the Tractarians. … That Pusey should bear the brunt of so much of this outbreak of popular feeling as was directed against the Oxford party was inevitable. Dr. Henry Phillpotts (Bishop of Exeter), the 'noble but solitary exception' to his timid brethren of the episcopate, did his best to encourage and defend one whom he recognized as loyally working for the Church of England; withdrew the restraint he had imposed on Pusey as to preaching in his diocese; and pressed him to come to his house freely.' http://anglicanhistory.org/ 23.4.07.

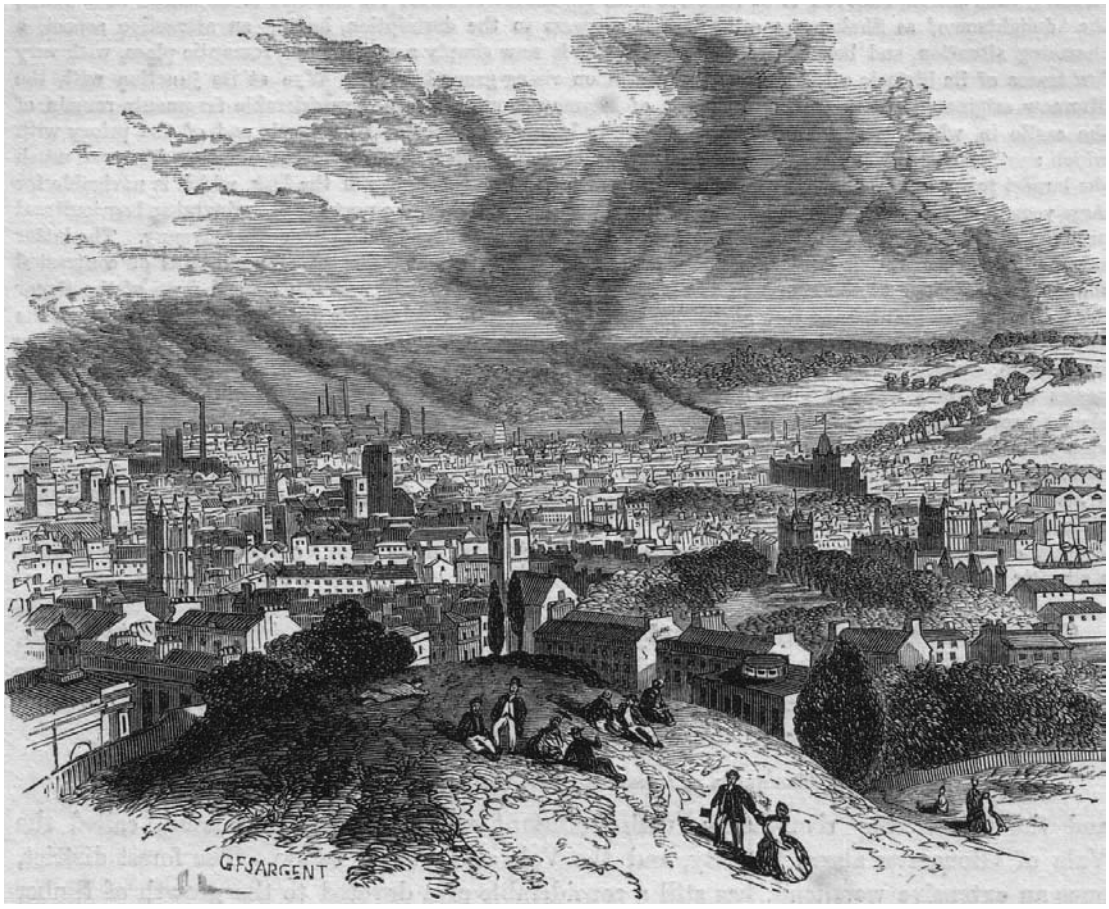
[12] *The Times*, 10th October, 1851, p.5..

[13] Measom, G.*: The official guide to the Great Western Railway… second edition*, Griffin, Bohn & Co., London, 1860.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Simmons, J.: *op.cit*., pp.22-33.



Bristol, c. 1860

Needless to say, Mr Gastric Juice was no happier on arrival in Bristol:

Got to Bristol at last – quarter of an hour behind time of course – bored to death with looking after the luggage. There's that girl Amelia – got to see after her too. Women are such a nuisance – greatest plagues in life. A dozen wild beasts were let loose all at once upon the poor luggage vans – heavens! How quickly they sprung upon the poor helpless animals and disembowelled them. How they tossed portmanteaus and flung trunks about in savage delight, rushing about with the carcasses on hand carriages – 'This side up – with Care' was down of course. It always is – never saw it otherwise. I always manage by writing this on the bottom of my packages – of course the top comes up out of sheer obstinacy. Cursed the trunks and the porters – nearly lost a great toe – trunk six feet long tumbled over. Done on purpose I'm positive. One of the green coated wild beasts pulled me out of the way – the brute nearly dislocated my shoulder. Got out of the place as quick as I could; my portmanteau, the last to come out of course, jammed into a Mummy[17]*. Couldn't be otherwise, half a ton at least on the top of it.*

Cursed the porters, the railway, and mankind in general, and got into the fly[18] *to drive to Redland Park. Park they call it – because there isn't a park. Relations live there. What's the use of relations? Nothing at all except to go and see 'em sometimes and make use of 'em and eat their dinners and make 'em shew you about; that's all they're fit for. It's what I do. And they're always so glad to see you. "And how long are you going to stop?" – Aye that's it – "How long are you going to stop? We shall be happy to see you as long as you like to remain". Ha Ha! I've heard that often. What does it mean? I'll tell you what it means: "You disgusting creature, get away as soon as ever you can". Relations are so kind and sincere. Well we saw 'em all – of course they were in raptures at seeing us and we were in raptures at seeing them, and of course so and so sent her love and this and that – all rubbish – never believed a word of it in my life.*

[17] i.e., as Chambers puts it, 'anything pounded into a formless mass'! (*Chambers 20th century dictionary*, 1983)
[18] A light horse-drawn carriage.

Went to Redland. Got there at lunch time. Brats as troublesome as could be – hate children – squalling brutes. I'm an advocate of infanticide and Godfrey's Cordial.[19] *Nip an evil in the bud, say I. They know how to do this sort of thing in the manufacturing districts – a few spoonfuls of the mixture do the business; then take the corpses of the little dears to the burial club and get the fees – how nice. This is maternal affection that they prate about – an instinct implanted by the Creator, stronger than life itself.*

Stayed in the house all day – weather gloomy of course – was forced to eat more than I could digest – only think of Beef-potatoes-bread-cheese-apple-dumplings-and-strong-ale for lunch at 2 o'clock and a dinner besides at ½ past 5. They wanted to make me ill of course because I'm travelling for the benefit of my health – that's considerate and kind.

Had to talk to 'em all the evening and endeavour to look pleased and happy – the girls have got a disgusting habit of punning. Hate puns – they make one laugh – laugh indeed – nobody has a right to laugh. I'd make 'em laugh the other side of their mouths, that I would. And then they ask riddles – pack of nonsense."Why is a tin pot like an Elephant?" Or some such trumpery. Never can see the joke – often tried. And then young ladies collect this rubbish and send it to their dear friends a hundred miles off – that's the way they spend their time nowadays. Better to learn the way to mend stockings, I think.

Went to bed – had the nightmare as was to be expected – couldn't be otherwise. Fought three devils at least for two hours – consequence of two dinners on weak stomach. This is hospitality – thought what a fool I'd been, now it was all over. That's what we all do when it's too late. Never can think of that before. Came out to get well and hearty and live sparingly and there I go and cram myself into a dyspepsia. No wonder I get the bile and become bad tempered.

Mr Sugar Face, however, found the arrival and hospitality much more pleasing, although he too suffered from being over-fed! –

At length we arrived in Bristol – what a scene of bustle and seeming confusion is a railway station on the arrival of a train, and how admirably do the porters perform their arduous tasks – with what energy do they speak and act. I am sure they are very careful and considerate both of people and people's property and I owe one of them a considerable debt of gratitude in having perhaps saved a broken leg when he pulled me out of the way of an overturned trunk.

As soon as we had seen to our luggage, we took fly and winged our way to 11 Burlington Buildings. On our way to Redland we met my dear Aunt and Cousin Maria who said they would soon return home to welcome us[20]*. On arrival we met the remainder of the olive branch, with smiling faces and cheerful hearts. Domestic scenes who can delineate? Suffice it to say that the remainder of the day was spent in their delightful society in that sweet converse and sprightly talk which render the English firesides so refreshing to the wearied mind.*

And then to sleep – perchance to dream, and I did dream. I don't like to dwell upon anything unpleasant so I will only say that my dreams were not of the nicest kind. The fact is I was not well, but was glad to find myself daily improving in health, thanks to the proscriptions of my cousin, Surgeon Henry Thompson.

This was a good choice of doctor. Henry Thompson (1820–1904), who was indeed first cousin to George and Amelia, was born and brought up in Framlingham, Suffolk. He studied medicine at University College, London, obtaining a gold medal for surgery in his final M.B. exam in 1851. It was Amelia who, in 1850, introduced Henry to her piano teacher, Kate Loder, who he married in 1861 and

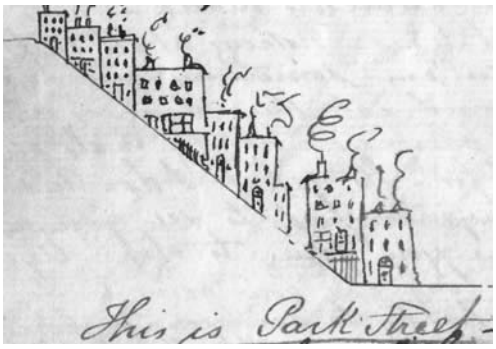
[19] Godfrey's Cordial, a mixture, which contained opium, water, treacle and spices, was administered to keep babies quiet, which it certainly did to the extent that it was blamed for a number of infant deaths. It was, of course, addictive, both for the baby and for working mothers.

[20] Annoyingly, at the date of the 1851 census, No. 11 was unoccupied and contemporary guides to Bristol show names of occupants of other houses in Burlington Buildings but not this one. However there is no doubt about the identity of the family they were visiting although, on census day, its abode was 5, Ellenborough Buildings, Westbury on Trym ! The Aunt concerned was their mother's sister Mary, born in Jamaica and married to another stockbroker, Robert Podmore Clark; their children included Maria, 22, and Laura, 19, who is mentioned later.

who in due course bore him a son and two daughters. From June 1850, he acted as house surgeon at University College Hospital. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1853 and was so highly regarded that, in 1863, he operated on Leopold I, King of the Belgians in Brussels and, in 1872, on Napoleon III, emperor of the French, at Chislehurst. He was a pioneer of cremation, 'an authority on diet, a devoted student of astronomy, an excellent artist, a collector of china and a man of letters. … As a host, he was famous for his 'octaves', which were dinners', at his house in Wimpole Street, 'of eight courses for eight people at eight o'clock'. The first of these was in 1872 and the last, the 301st, shortly before his death. Among his guests were 'the most famous persons in the worlds of art, letters, science, politics, diplomacy, and fashion' and included, at the 300th, the Prince of Wales, later George V. Knighted in 1867, he was created a baronet in 1899.[21]

Gastric Juice was so busy grumbling, on his way through Bristol, that he failed to notice anything of the city. Sugar Face, however, was more observant:

I have said nothing hitherto of the city through which we passed – there is nothing very striking or remarkable in the City of Bristol. I must except however Radcliffe Church[22], well known to the antiquary and archaeologist – I visited it four year ago. Besides this and the cathedral, I think there is scarcely anything to notice – dirty narrow streets – redolent with the odours of West India productions – a commercial population – fish dealing on the quay – heavy carts – ships loading and unloading. Sailors, donkey carts and clothes shops fill up the background and render the whole one busy scene alike suggestive to the inquiring mind as gratifying to the searcher after the picturesque. They have a funny way of building all up the side of hills here:



No doubt they are a sluggish people in Bristol and require these hills to animate them a little. This reminds me of a story of a good devout old parson who once made a remark with the force of which every one must I am sure be struck. He was talking of large and populous cities and then went on to say what a kind and wise ordering of Providence it was that rivers should always flow near them to supply them with water and the blessings connected with that necessary article of life. As he grew older, continued he, he constantly found some fresh instance of the exquisite harmony of nature and this one he had lately arrived at and it cheered his soul. I own the idea was new to me. I must confess I had another theory totally different to that of the good old man. Most likely he was right and by parity of reasoning the hills in Bristol were sent for a wise and beneficent purpose to the inhabitants.

Thursday October 23rd

The next morning, Sugar Face was somewhat recovered, if tired:

I got up this morning not much refreshed with my night's disquiet. I cannot call it rest; but endeavoured to dispel the recollections thereof with pleasanter thoughts and more welcome ideas. Depend upon it, that's the best way whenever you are troubled with some such annoyance – don't dwell upon it and feed upon it as some Morbid Minds do, but fling it away with all the energy you are capable of, and you will acquire a moral power over yourself that will overcome most of those little troubles that make up the sum total of life. "Sugar Face, my dear fellow, you're moralising again – do you call that writing a journal I ask? "Certainly" I replied to myself. "Do you suppose I go out on a tour just to scribble down what I saw here and what I looked at there? Look at the first page my friend and you will

[21] *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, OUP, Oxford, 2004; Cope, Z.: *The versatile Victorian*, Harvey & Blythe, London, 1951.

[22] St. Mary's, Radcliffe.

perceive that I want to extract a moral from everything that comes under my observation, a moral that shall make me think well of myself (if possible) and better of the world". "You're right, You're right," said the Other half of me.

Gastric Juice was also of a mind to ramble philosophically after his disturbed night:

Woke as usual – body racked – mind distracted. Swore I wouldn't surfeit again. Won't, I suppose, until next time; it's the way with all of us. Everybody knows the old story:

"The Devil got sick, the Devil a monk would be, the Devil grew well – devil a monk was he"[23]*. We're all the same – sinners at night – saints in the morning. But I'm preaching a sermon. Hate sermons – never listen to 'em except when I want to go to sleep – best thing I know for that.*

Promised I would stop here today – suppose I must. Might as well be miserable here as anywhere else. There's that girl, Amelia – she bothers my life out – there's no peace with her. Obliged of course to take her everywhere – get no thanks for it though – put down as a matter of fraternal duty I suppose. I'll marry some day out of pure spite, that I will, and then when I'm savage (I'm always savage) I'll beat my wife. Can't beat my sister – never heard of anyone beating his sister either in ancient of modern history. Would give a reward to any one who would find out an instance and send it to me – address –

"Mr Gastric Juice,
Choleric Cottage,
Latherem Lane, London,"

As to beating your wife, that's done every day – a mere trifle – merely an amusement that husbands practise. But beating one's own sister! There'd be something novel in that – I'll introduce the custom. It'll tend no doubt to promote the peace of many families.

After these further revelations of Gastric Juice's perverted mind, he continues thus:

Stayed indoors all the morning and spoiled several sheets of note paper. That's a confession few would make – true nevertheless. Everybody writes nowadays – march of intellect I suppose – progress of the human mind. All comes from educating the people. There was that servant girl – wrote to her friend by the penny post to say she was going to leave her place because "Master and Missis spoke such very bad grammar". That's the pass things have come to.

Lunch finished – walked into Bristol. A hole of a place – a commercial port – commercial places always smell – I don't know how it is. Then there's that horrid Park Street – I got down it somehow – I never should get up it. Built up the side of a hill that's as steep as a house. It's a way they've got in Bristol, building on steep hills. Well!

Took a boat with my Uncle and was rowed down the river to see a great ship, the Demerara. Was asked to go – couldn't refuse of course. Captain civil – great wonder – shewed us over her and explained everything, spun a yarn about her length & breadth & tonnage; seemed to have the figures at his fingers ends. Hate figures – its only little minds remember 'em. Endeavoured to look nautical nevertheless. Enquired the length of her fore foot and whether she would go well in stays. Uncle evidently puzzled –Intended him to be. Carpenters evidently struck with the extent of knowledge I displayed. Captain handed us out. Couldn't help meditating a bit after leaving the ship. There was this ship said to be the largest in the world and built by those stupid Bristol people. They built the Great Britain too, so they did – they built her in a dock that they couldn't get her out of – very clever certainly. The man that planned it must be a genius.

Sugar Face's version is more informative since he notes the details which Gastric Juice despises:

Spent the morning before lunch in writing home, and scribbling my first day's hodge podge of incidents & reflections. After lunch I walked into town and accompanied my uncle to see the Demerara lying down the river. We took a wherry and had a delightful row down the stream which, by the bye, is

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[23] Said of those who in times of sickness or danger make pious resolutions, but forget them when danger is past and health recovered. Rabelais, *Works*. Book iv. Chap. xxiv; reference noted in Bartlett, J.: *Familiar Quotations*, 10th ed., 1919; also E. Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 1898, notes the Latin version: *Dæmon languebat, monachus bonus esse volebat; sed cum convaluit, manet ut ante fuit*. http://www.bartleby.com/100/730.html 11.2.07.

no stream at all for they have made one huge dock of it by putting dock gates in at Clifton. The Demerara is the largest ship in the world, 3126 tons, although six feet shorter than that leviathan the Great Britain she has more room amid-ships. She has four decks. Spar deck which is the top, main deck, lower deck and orlop[24] deck. The spar deck flush from stem to stern – a magnificent sight for the admirer of naval architecture. She is fitting up and when that's done she will be taken to Glasgow to have her engines of 800 horse power put in. Bristol may indeed be proud of having turned out two such magnificent vessels as these. What feelings of manly exultation must fill the minds of their commanders as they tread the deck in the consciousness of power and responsibility. To gaze on their vast proportions they give you an idea that nothing would ever prevail against them. Vain thought! What is Man's Mightiest Work – a fabric like this for instance, intended to breast the ocean and contend with the roaring waves? What will it be but their sports, their toy, their plaything, and when wearied of cast up perhaps on some dreary shore, a helpless wreck?

Little did George know, when he wrote this, what the fate of the *Demerara* would be. On 12th November, six days after the end of this trip, George added a postscript to his journal:

I little thought when I viewed the Demerara on Thursday 23rd of October, and indulged in various reflections and speculations that naturally arose in my mind as I contemplated her magnificent proportions, that in 20 short days I should learn that this splendid vessel has become a complete wreck through the unskilfulness of the pilot who had the charge of taking her out of the Port of Bristol. The following extract from today's Times will prove interesting – the Times of the 13th gives further particulars, the fears entertained in the previous day's paper having become unfortunately realised:

THE ACCIDENT TO THE STEAMER DEMERARA. –

BRISTOL, Nov. 11. – The alarming accident which occurred yesterday morning to this magnificent steamer as she was proceeding on her passage down the river Avon, and of which some particulars are given in *The Times* of this day, has created a good deal of excitement and consternation in this city. Thousands visited the spot where she is lying, both yesterday and to-day. Last night the scene was of a most extraordinary description; tar barrels were lighted in every direction, and hundreds of persons were busily engaged at work on board the ill-fated steamer, while both banks of the river, notwithstanding that a heavy rain was falling, were crowded with thousands of spectators, including some of the principal merchants and magistrates of the city. The most indefatigable exertions were used, and about 7 p.m. she began to move, and the parties engaged succeeded in getting her up to a place called "Eaglestaffs' Quarry," and there moored her upon a soft bank of mud, with a view of letting her lie there while they stopped some of the holes in her. At 10 at night, however, she broke from her moorings, dragged the anchors out of the ground, and then swung again right across the river, where she remained until this morning, when with the rising tide she was again floated and got up to the entrance of the lock, where she now lies. Opinions as to her ultimate fate are much divided, many nautical men of great experience declaring that she must become a total wreck, while others are inclined to think that it is possible she may yet be repaired. From inquiries made our Bristol correspondent has been enabled to ascertain that it was intended the Demerara should proceed from Bristol to Glasgow under canvas, where she was to be fitted with her engines, boilers, &c. The Independence, a large steamer of 180 horse-power, and which had been long engaged as a Liverpool steam tug, was specially despatched from Glasgow to act as a tender for her during the voyage. So numerous were the applications of the Bristol Channel pilots to have the honour of taking charge of this leviathan steamer that Mr. Patterson, the builder, placed the choice of a pilot in the hands of the haven master, who selected one from the competitors. On Monday morning there was a high spring tide, flowing to within a very few inches of 30 feet, while the Demerara, with 1,200 tons of ballast in her, only drew 15 feet or a very little more. It was purposed that she should leave the lock of Cumberland-basin some time before high water, so as to pass the most difficult reaches in the river with a flowing tide; but some delay occurred in getting her to the entrance of the lock, as when the water was out she had imbedded herself in a kind of mud cradle in the basin, and it was not till highwater that she passed through the lock, which she did in safety, and she then proceeded down the river towed by the Independence. Crowds were collected on the banks of the river and loudly cheered her as she passed down, but several nautical men at the time remarked that "she had a great deal too much way on her." She was then going at the rate of five knots an hour, instead of, as she ought to have done in that part of the river, at one or, at the most, two knots. Had she only succeeded in getting a little lower down she might have

[24] The lowest deck, where the cables are stowed - usually below the waterline.

steamed right out into the channel as fast as they liked. This increased speed was the more dangerous owing to the enormous length of the Demerara, which rendered it difficult for her to turn safely round the points of the river, and the great length of the tug, the Independence, was another disadvantage. Had one of the short Bristol river tugs been employed the consequences might have been otherwise, as she would have worked more handily, and their commanders are thoroughly acquainted with every point in the river. Mr. Patterson, the builder, who was himself on board, repeatedly said to the pilot: "Do not go so fast. Do not go so fast, there is too much way on her"; and his opinion proved too well founded, for as she was rounding the second point in the river, notwithstanding plenty of water and plenty of room in the river, her rate was so great that she went ashore, swung round athwart the river, and lay "stem and stern" in the perilous position described in *The Times* of today; as the tide receded her butts started, her frame twisted, and there was every probability of her speedily becoming a total wreck. Almost incredible exertions were made yesterday to get her off, the crowds of citizens who flocked to the spot all voluntarily tendered their assistance to Mr. Patterson, who is much respected. The Demerara, when she left Cumberland-basin yesterday morning, was pronounced by competent judges to be one of the finest modelled as well as almost the largest ship in the world, her build in particular was commented on as being so strong as almost to defy the elements. Now she presents a melancholy spectacle; her back broken, her cabins destroyed, her butts started, and the water pouring from her sides. It has not yet been ascertained whether her keel is broken, but it is much to be feared that it is, as one of her pumps is broken off close to the bottom. With the exception of the Great Britain the Demerara is the largest steam ship afloat; the length of keel is 276 feet; length between the perpendiculars, 232 feet ; length overall, 316 feet; about six feet shorter than the Great Britain.

But we left Sugar Face as he had just finished contemplating this ship in port, in its full magnificence:

After a thorough view of the Demerara we wended our way up Saint Vincent's Rocks, Clifton, by the Zig Zag, a path which as its name implies winds up the whole height of the Rocks. Everybody I believe knows Clifton or ought to know it, therefore I need not attempt to describe it. Redland is but a few minutes walk across the fields from Clifton. So we soon got home. Minnie did not accompany us, she went to Clifton to make a call.

The rest of the day passed very much as yesterday did. Ah! I believe we may all say the same – yesterday passes – today comes – tomorrow follows. "Well then, Sugar face, my dear fellow – Carpe diem[25] *– Make hay while the sun shines and put the best face on things." Tomorrow we intend to resume our journey where we left off last year and so make a complete circle by setting out from here direct to Exeter and Plymouth, returning by Torquay, Dartmouth, Teignmouth & half a dozen more 'mouths'. Then the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, Southampton, Chichester, Brighton to London, to be back by 11th November. You see we have our work very nearly cut out for us. I hope we shall have time to accomplish it.*

Gastric Juice was in a relatively benign frame of mind that evening, actually attempting a joke:

Walked to Redland over Clifton Rocks – yes – positively over them from the road below. A terrific feat to accomplish up that horrid Zig Zag – hate zig zags – they're always up hill. Got back to Redland to dinner – after dinner took tea. Girls asking riddles again – they think 'em clever – perhaps they are. Puzzled Laura with one, quite original – made for the occasion. Asked her why she was like a discontented bean stalk. She gave it up of course. So do you, you'd never guess it – well I'll tell you. "Because she is hankering after one pod more". What d'ye think of that? Don't see the joke perhaps. Well then – she's engaged to a Mr Podmore. Ah ha! Now you see it. Don't sneer; its all envy – you make up as good a one, that's all.

Laura, then aged 19, did in fact marry John Podmore. In Chapter 2, Mr Sugar Face will continue the story of their trip as they take the Great Western Railway Express, which had been introduced just six years earlier, in 1845, to Exeter.

[25] Seize the day.

Chapter 2

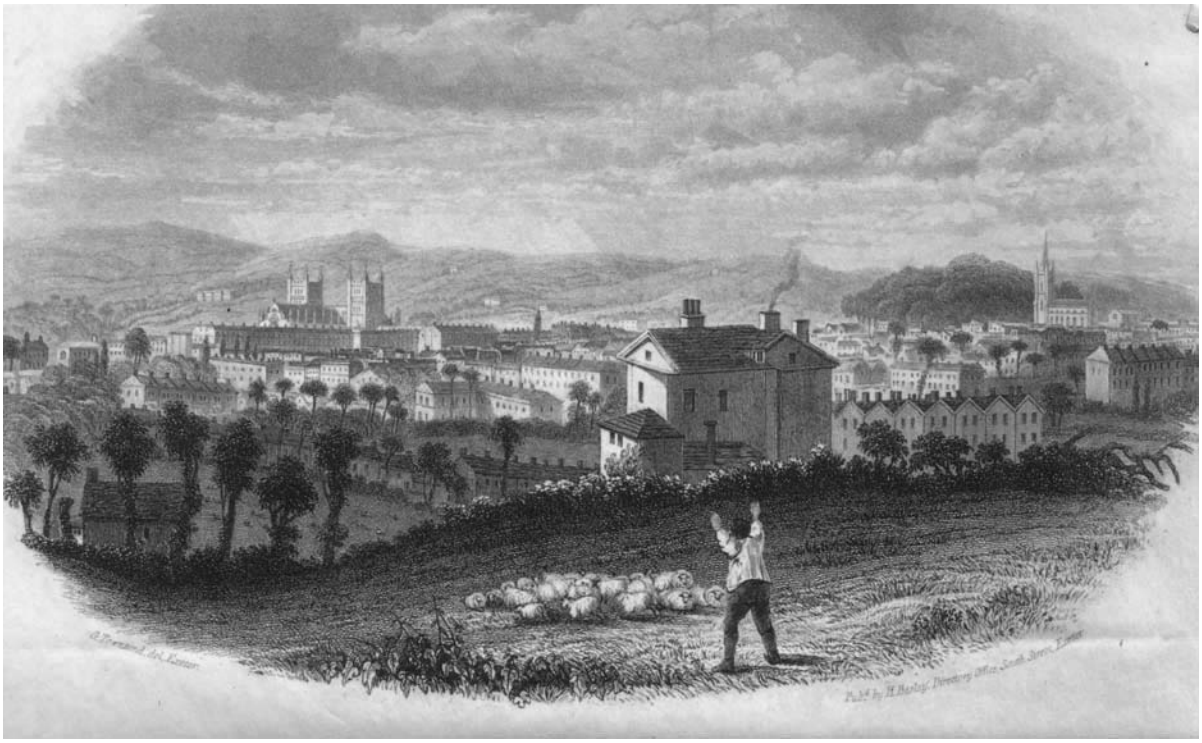
In which the travellers visit Exeter, Plymouth and Devonport dockyard, and Miss Amelia is frivolous with a bunch of seaweed.

Friday 24th October

Mr Sugar Face:

Today our travelling began in earnest so far as viewing fresh objects is concerned, the preceding part of our journey being familiar to us both (this is my fourth visit to Bristol). Having taken leave of our kind friends at Redland we set out by the 10 o'clock train for Exeter where we arrived about half past 12. We passed through some very pretty scenes, the railway running a long distance between two ranges of hills, but there was nothing very striking. I noticed the huge heaps of apples in the Devonshire orchards destined for the far famed cider. Weston Super Mare looked pretty about a mile off, its broad sands stretching into the sea. I visited it in 1847.

When the carriage stopped and the guards and porters shouted "Exeter", I put my head out of the window to get a glance of the city but to my infinite astonishment nothing was to be seen of the shape of the town. The fact is, this 'Queen of the West' is built nearly a mile away from the station on the tops of hills which are naturally or artificially made very flat for the streets. When we got into the town we found it quite level – the whole is hid from the railway traveller by clumps of beautiful trees and you have to ascend a winding road to gain the summit.



Exeter from the South-East

The place struck us as exceedingly neat, well built and clean. The High Street is really very pretty. We had 5 hours before us so we determined to dine there, visit the cathedral and then speed on to Plymouth.

At this time, Exeter was a city of nearly 40,000 inhabitants; 'the elevated situation of the city promotes its cleanliness and ventilation, while its antiquity, its enchanting neighbourhood, its proximity to the sea, its abundantly supplied markets, its continual supply of amusements, and its railway accommodation, render it a favourite place of resort to the nobility and gentry, as well as to the invalid.'[26] So perhaps they would have done well to be in less of a hurry!

[26] White, W.: *History, gazetteer and directory of Devonshire and of the city of Exeter ...,* Sheffield, 1850, p.49.

The cathedral outwardly is a delicious old place with its two Norman towers 145 feet high, its ridged roof and flying buttresses all wearing that unmistakable hand of Time. It has 10 chapels inside, many monumental effigies but only two brasses. Oh that I had by me the requisite paper and heel ball, thought I – how I would have borne away their facsimiles for certain persons of my acquaintance who I know set great store by them.

Exeter Cathedral

After looking through the interior, we ascended the northern tower wherein hangs 'Peter Bell', weighing 12500 pounds. I must say the size disappointed me, I thought to have seen him much larger. I hope he has not wasted away since he was strung up, he certainly looked very hollow and his tongue was hanging out of his mouth. We then ascended the remainder of the 142 steps which lead to the leads or roof – whence we had a magnificent prospect – Exeter itself on the hill, the cathedral overtopping the city and our tower overtopping the cathedral – what could be finer? It was a grand cyclorama[27] where you moved round instead of the picture. I looked down over the battlements several times. It was an awful sight – from below it looked nothing. It is only when you get up there that you have a pretty correct idea of gravitation – 145 feet all in one clean wall sheer down to the ground. We were soon satisfied with the view and were made more than half giddy in descending the spiral stone stair case. Those Normans certainly knew how to make stone staircases and wearying they are too!

We dined at the Clarence hotel opposite the cathedral.[28] After dining, Minnie attended service while I took a nap on the sofa and at 6.05 pm we were off for Plymouth by the South Devon Railway[29] which skirts the sea shore for some distance. It was dark, so we could not observe the adjacent country, and as we had the carriage to ourselves most of the way, we reposed – I on one side and she on the other. We arrived at Plymouth at 9 and immediately drove to that magnificent hotel the Royal, which the guide book says could furnish accommodation for an army. But I must leave off for the present; Minnie has gone to bed as sleepy as an owl at midday and as knocked up as she well can be. So good night my dear Sugar Face – I've done for to day. Bless my soul its tomorrow! It's positively 5 min. past one, London time – to bed – to bed.

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[27] 'A cyclorama is a cylindrical panoramic painting designed to provide a viewer, standing in the middle of the cylinder, with a 360° view of the painting. …Panoramas were first invented by Irishman Robert Barker who wanted to find a way to capture the panoramic view from a hill near Edinburgh, Scotland. He subsequently opened his first cyclorama in Edinburgh in 1787'. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclorama 11.2.07.

[28] Originally a famous 14th-century Coaching House, in the Cathedral Yard; now the ABode Hotel.

[29] The South Devon Railway from Bristol to Plymouth, via Exeter, opened in 1849, i.e. only two years before their trip; the branch to Torquay had opened the previous year whilst Exeter to Newton Abbott had been open since 1846. (Simmons, J. & Biddle, G.: *op. cit.*)

And here is Mr Gastric Juice on the same day:

Took leave of relations at Redland today. Gave a piece of my mind about such people before so needn't say much now. Tried to squeeze out a tear at parting but couldn't do it, engine wouldn't work. Didn't think of it or might have brought an onion – looks interesting – watery eyes – tender heart. At least so the ladies think. Pshaw!

Set off in train to Exeter. Railway travelling all the same – saves a deal of trouble in noting down account of journey. Pastures this side, pastures that; then a tunnel, then a cutting, then an embankment; a distant church, a clump of trees, horses feeding, cows grazing, a brawling stream, a mill dam, a canal, a bridge, a boat, a haystack, frightened sheep and a thousand other things which are no sooner seen than lost sight of – and when lost sight of, forgotten.

Got to Exeter at last – everything appears slow after the Express train. Like finding fault – shews your superiority. Nothing so powerful as criticism and none wield more powerful sceptres than they who wield the critics pen. Ask the authors.

Visited the cathedral of course. Couldn't go to Exeter and not see <u>that</u> – like a friend of mine who went to America and when he was asked if he had seen the falls of Niagara he replied that he had <u>not</u> but that he had <u>heard</u> them. I envy that man his mind. Looked inside the cathedral. Poked about the monuments. Saw a brass. Was told there were two. What was that to me? Don't care about brasses. Some people work for hours at 'em with huge pieces of paper and lumps of some sort of stuff – Cobbler's Wax[30] I suppose.

Walked up into a tower. Woman gave us the key of the door on the roof. Didn't want to tire her legs. Got up at last into a belfry and saw Peter Bell,[31] as they call a bell hanging up here. Couldn't help thinking (it was too irresistible) of a whimsical sort of comparison. There's the Bishop of Exeter[32]!! Hope he'll never see this – I compared him to a bell – 'sounding brass' wants 'charity' – pray look at this text and fill up the remainder[33] – he must have been sitting for his portrait to the Apostle. Then there are other <u>striking</u> points of resemblance – here's 'Peter Bell' only exceeded by Great Tom of Oxford (the bell of Christ Church) *and is not <u>our Peter</u> only exceeded by <u>another Peter</u> who doesn't live at Oxford to be sure – but at <u>Rome</u>?*

Presumably he is making a comparison between the Collegiate Church of St. Peter, Westminster, i.e. Westminster Abbey, and St. Peter's, Rome.

Got out onto the roof at last, legs thoroughly done: fancy 152 steps up a winding spiral Norman stone staircase badly lighted. Modern glass stuck into loop holes made 860 year ago! Looked about – certainly very high, both physically and morally, in my own estimation – I've seen a hundred views – Pshaw! They're all the same – ex uno disce omnes.[34] Fine, isn't it, to quote Latin? – shews you've been to school. I never omit an opportunity in conversation when any auditory is rather ignorant, as I think. Look at your House of Commons, how they applaud a quotation! Wouldn't do, you see, to appear ignorant. Never appear ignorant even if you are. Shake your head and look as sage as you can – sure to succeed. Don't forget to <u>listen</u> – great art that – many a man made his fortune by learning how to listen. I've heard a man tell the same story and make the same joke seven and twenty times and I've laughed at the seven and twentieth time more heartily than I did at the first.

Mr Gastric Juice has a remarkable ability for combining good advice with dubious advice in the same paragraph !

Came down again. Gave the woman a shilling. They used to do it cheaper at St Paul's – charged only two pence. But that's abolished – a great pity. What people can get for nothing they don't care about – that's the way of the world.

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[30] A resin used by cobblers to coat their thread and used by pipers (i.e. players of bag-pipes) because it is potentially sticky enough to grip wood ! It seems unlikely to have been used by brass-rubbers.

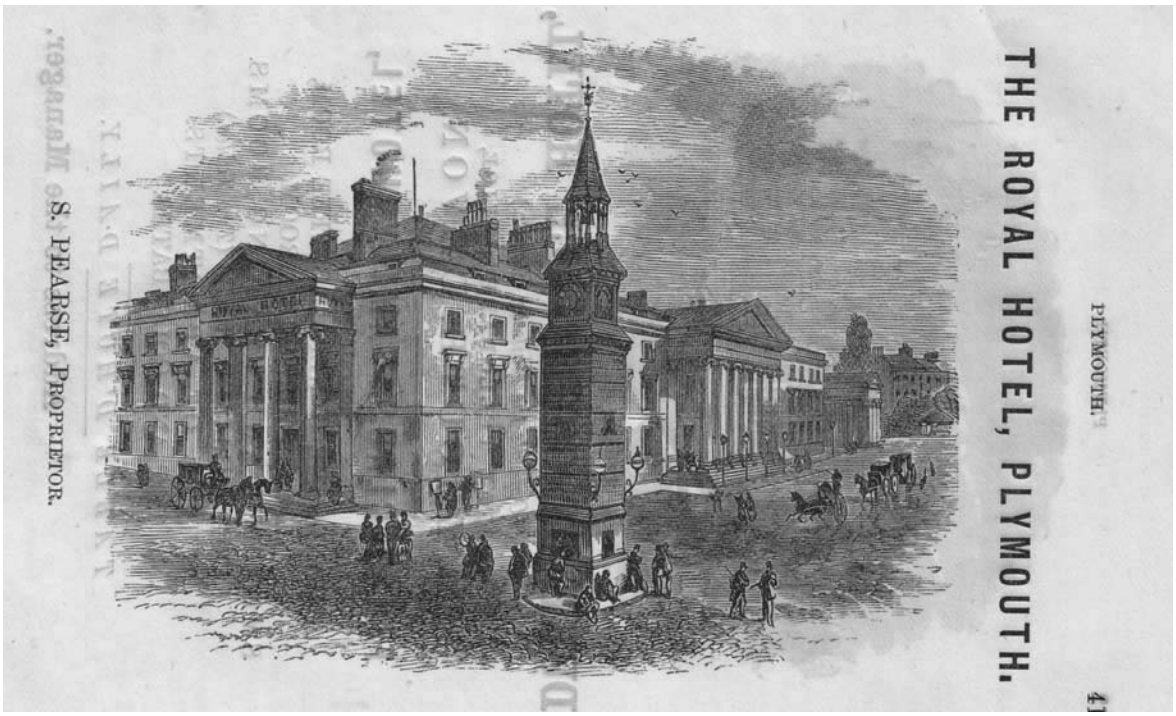
[31] Nineteenth century slang for 'simple rustic' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Bell 16.2.07.)

[32] Dr Henry Phillpotts. See note 7.

[33] ''Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal' *The Bible*, the authorised version, 1Corinthians 13, v.1.

[34] From one, learn (about) all.

That girl Amelia went to the afternoon service while I remained and had a nap on the sofa in the hotel. Thought I might as well sleep there as in the cathedral – save the desecration, don't you see. Service over – nap done – Minnie back again. We bundled off to Plymouth – nothing to say – saw nothing – pitch dark – arrived at last – terribly sleepy! Omnibus – Royal Hotel – tea – candles and bed.



The Greek Revival Royal Hotel and Theatre, designed by John Foulton and built in 1811-13, was 'unrivalled in external appearance by the most distinguished hotel of the Metropolis' and …its 'interior aspect and accommodations' were 'in perfect harmony with its outward character'.[35]

Doubtless the Royal Hotel was a healthy enough place for our tourists but Plymouth was a remarkably congested and insanitary city at this time. Its population grew by 13,000 between 1840 and 1850 whilst the number of dwellings increased by only 900 and waterborne drainage was rare. There had been a cholera epidemic only two years earlier, in 1849, which killed about 4% of the inhabitants.[36]

Things had evidently got out of control somewhat since 1832 when we are told: 'Instead of the rude merriment or boisterous discord of former times, taste, elegance, and refinement distinguishes the higher ranks of society, whilst the manners of the middle and lower classes participate in the genial change that has been effected by the spread of information and the advance of literature'.[37]

The next morning, here is Sugar Face being somewhat patronising in his attitude to the Devonport docks policeman:

Saturday 25th October

After breakfast we walked over to Devonport to look over the dockyard. We had to wait at the entrance a few minutes for the policeman to accompany us; he was taking another party round when we arrived. He seemed to be a very intelligent man and acted in the capacity of guide to our perfect satisfaction; there was also a certain simplicity about him – highly interesting.

There is nothing so refreshing as meeting a man devoid of guile and actuated by a sort of indifference to the pursuits of men and the world in general. I discovered this from several remarks that he made and I

[35] Britton, J. & Brayley, E.: *Devonshire and Cornwall illustrated*, Fisher, H., Fisher, R. & Jackson, P., London, 1832, partly quoting Rowe's *Panorama of Plymouth.*
[36] Walling, R.: *The story of Plymouth*, Westaway Books, London, 1950, p.221.
[37] Britton, J. & Brayley, E.: *op. cit*.

determined to give him an extra shilling for the moral treat he had afforded me. We viewed the usual objects to be seen at these great naval depots besides some unusual ones our guide pointed out to us: the anchor that belonged to a Chinese junk; a piece of rock, of several hundred weight, which stuck in the bottom of the Gibraltar, when she struck at Gibraltar – how she ever managed to get home safely heaven only knows, if the stone had dropt out she must have sunk to the bottom in no time. Then there was the capital of a column from the Temple of the Sun at Athens – beautiful marble, sadly marred by exposure to the skyey influences. I forgot to ask how it got here; it was lying among a lot of old iron, used up wood and other rubbish – a saddening relic of antiquity.

The area of the dockyard comprises 72 acres, has 5 building slips and (I think) two dry docks, besides one building; they would not let us go on board any of the ships – this has been a regulation ever since a fire took place here, I don't know when. All the slips were occupied with vessels of the greatest force in their respective rates. They build nowadays vessels of two decks to carry as much weight of metal as three-deckers do – for instance the Narcissus now building will carry 90 guns on her two decks, the aggregate weight of which (measured in the weight of the shot) exceeds considerably our 120 gunners.

The dockyard, at this time of peace, employed about 1500 'shipwrights, caulkers, joiners, smiths, sawyers, rope-makers, painters, riggers, sail-makers, labourers, &c., besides a large number of apprentices.' The complement increased to about 4000 in time of war.[38] In his version of the visit, Gastric Juice adds a bit of colour but is certainly no less patronising, even if his tongue is, as ever, firmly in his cheek:

Got up pretty lively this morning and walked to Devonport over Stonehouse bridge with that girl. Didn't think it was so far as it proved to be. She leaned on my arm like a lump of lead – she always does – specially when she knows I'm tired. Never mind – grin and bear it. Got to the dockyard at last. Name in visitors' book. Wait for policeman: – "Now Sir if you please – this man will shew you round." Round we went. Policeman Prosy: "That Sir is the warden's house, and that above it the paymaster's office. That is the chapel at which you can be accommodated with seats should you be here tomorrow". Such was the burden of his discourse.

Didn't care a fig for the warden's house or the pay office or the chapel, so went on. At last came to a heap of rubbish. Policeman very important – shewed us a barbarous looking piece of iron that he called the anchor of a Chinese junk, and explained how they put the stock in by the fluke and how we put it in at the other end. Felt considerably edified – said "Curious", at which policeman seemed gratified and encouraged.

He then shewed us an ugly looking bit of stone which he said was the capital of the column of the Temple of the Sun at Aythens. Pretended to be interested – looked at it sideways, upwards, downwards, then at policeman and exclaimed "Wonderful". Policement evidently delighted, thought himself learned no doubt – set to work with fresh alacrity in pointing out to us new objects. "That Sir", said he, "that stone was taken out of the bottom of the Gibraltar – she struck at Gibraltar and brought it home with her and when the shipwrights examined her in dock they found it sticking in her – it weights several hundred pounds". Listened with rapt attention to policeman's harangue – said "Astonishing", and walked on. Couldn't help thinking of the stone however. Curious case of lithotomy this – some wags would have sent post haste to London for Liston.

Gastric Juice is being particularly, tiresomely obscure ! The famous surgeon Robert Liston F.R.S. had performed lithotomy (stone-removal) operations at University College Hospital, notably in 1847, using ether as an anaesthetic. There were reports in the *Lancet* and elsewhere[39].

Policeman very affable. Talked a deal of rubbish about the dockyard and the ships and the dry docks and the building slips and I don't know what besides. One part of our conversation struck me. I talked about the building slips – made size observations and said: "They'll soon make 'em all of glass and iron, now we've got the Crystal Palace."

[38] White, W.: *op. cit.,* p. 644.
[39] http://matrix.msu.edu/~johnsnow/chronethersnow.php 16.2.07.

"No doubt Sir" replied policeman. "they tell me, I don't know whether its true Sir, some duke's gardener made it after the plan of some green house".

Heavens! Here was a confession of ignorance. I felt staggered. The Duke of Devonshire styled "some duke" and Paxton termed "some duke's gardener" – and this in Devonport, in Devonshire, the very place of his dukedom. This, in a government establishment – this in a place where newspapers exist and a railway runs hourly between it and the Mighty Glass Palace itself. Twas overpowering. Felt how small we all are. Men like these, men of rank and talent who might justly have supposed that their names would have been familiar, not just to Englishmen but to the world, are unknown even in name to a policeman in Devonport dockyard. Thought of an ill natured thing: write an account to the Duke and Paxton. Warrant it would bring 'em down a peg or two in their own estimation. 'Curious Episode in the history of the Exhibition'. Let the writer of it head it 'Ignorance in the 19th Century'.

Joseph Paxton (1803-65) was Head Gardener at Chatsworth and later manager of the Duke's estates, which included Chiswick House. Using ideas tried in his 'Great Stove' at Chatsworth and smaller greenhouses made for the Queen, he designed the Crystal Palace which was built in Hyde Park (it was moved to Sydenham subsequently) for the Great Exhibition of 1851. The duke referred to was the 6th Duke of Devonshire and he owned eight stately homes and 200,000 acres but neither he nor his ancestors had anything much to do with Devon.[40]

Next, Mr Sugar Face and Amelia set off on a boat trip:

Having spent a very agreeable hour, we wended our way to Mount Wise, a favourite promenade of the Devonportians, from whence we hired a sailing boat to visit the breakwater.

The breakwater, from Mount Edgecumbe

We had a delightful sail of three miles and a half down the Hamoaze[41] estuary, I steering, 'Youth at the prow and pleasure at the helm'[42] I can guarantee the latter part but am sadly out of my simile as regards the antecedent, for our 'Youth' was sixty at least.

[40] http://www.victoria-adventure.org/water_gardening/biographies/joseph_paxton.html 16.2.07.
[41] Otherwise known as the Tamar.
[42] Thomas Gray (1716-71), in *The Bard,* 1754-5.

He explained to us the various points of interest as each one attracted our observation and there were quite enough to occupy us all the way there and back. Question and answer – a comprehensive little catechism of the topography of this magnificent scene. A reference to a map of Devonshire will serve more to give a correct idea of it than pages of description. It was exhilarating in the highest degree. Our little bark skimmed the waves as if instinct[43] *with life, as the gentle breeze filled the sail and the sun enlivened earth and sea with a mild and genial ray. It seemed to me, as I felt my cheeks fanned by the delicious air, as if health itself were borne upon its wings, renovating, invigorating health – health that I could draw in at each inspiration and rejoice and exult in the possession.*

At length we landed on the breakwater with its 3,700,000 tons of rock and rubble, a mile long and 16 yards broad at the top, two feet above high water; 120 yards broad at the base and of a varying height of from 18 to 45 feet. We spent half an hour in promenading on the top, which was then many yards above the tide, it being low water Consequently we could examine minutely the plan of this gigantic structure.

Started in 1812, it was substantially useful as a barrier within a year, though still unfinished by 1847. In 1817 and 1824 it was severely damaged by storms but nevertheless saved much damage on shore and to shipping. In addition to 3.6 million tons of limestone there was a further 2.5 million cubic feet of granite facing and paving and the overall cost was around £1.5 million[44].

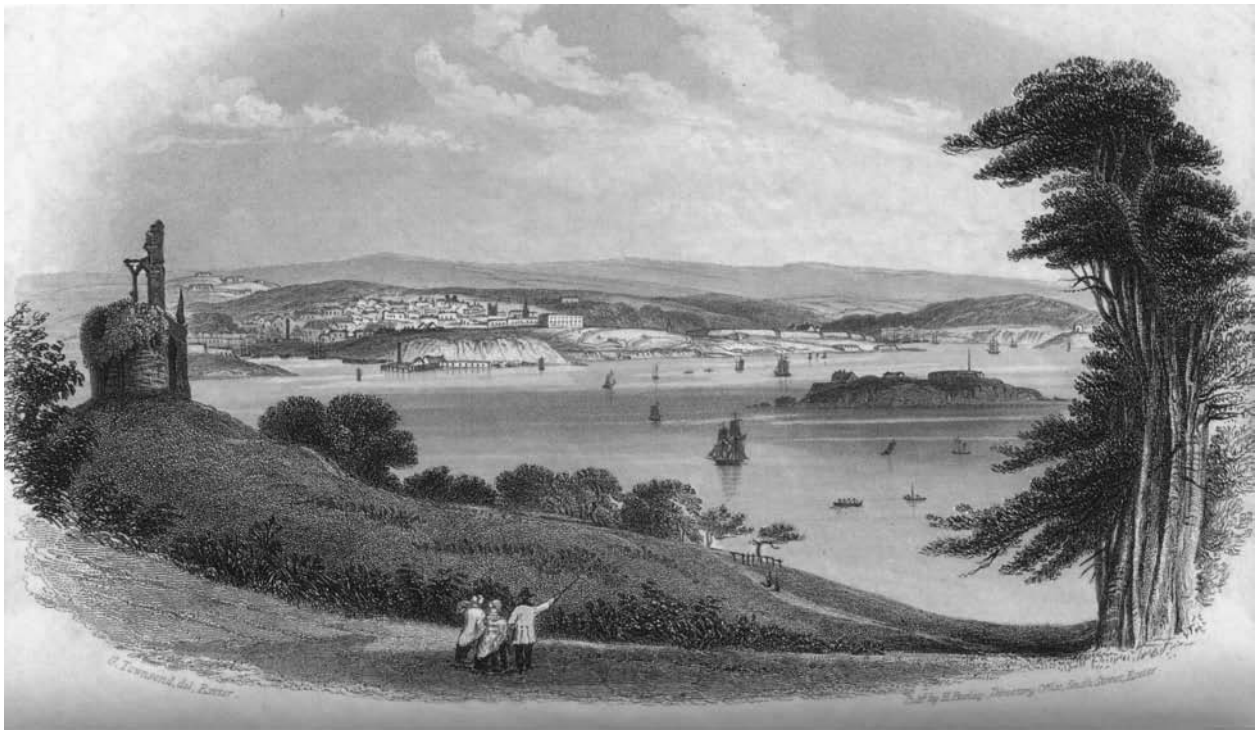
The view from this point was of course very striking and beautiful. Looking seawards we beheld the English Channel dotted as far as the eye could reach with hundreds of vessels. On the right, to the far west, we were told by the old man that the Eddystone might be seen with the naked eye. Stay – this was from the top of the high house at the western extremity of the breakwater when the day is free from haze!

The Eddystone Lighthouse

Turning gradually (to the right), Cawsand bay comes into view, then the far famed Mount Edgcombe which partially hides Devonport from the eye, then Stonehouse and Plymouth with their hundred buildings. now government depots, then St Nicholas Island and Bovisand. These and a hundred other objects, some large, some small, combine to render Plymouth Sound the most beautiful estuary on the English coast.

[43] i.e. 'imbued'.

[44] White, W.: op.cit., pp. 641-2.



Plymouth from Mount Edgecumbe

Mount Edgecumbe

It was one of the most delicious half hours I ever spent; it was a half hour with the best author, there was a freshening and life giving power in the breeze such as I never felt before. Ah! It only proved how much I was a stranger to its inspiriting presence and how much I needed its restoring influences. I may say the same for Minnie – her spirits rose upon this occasion and vented themselves in harmless and playful sallies, provocative of intense mirthfulness in her. I shall only say that a long bunch of seaweed served for an admirable weapon wherewith to lash the salt water over me and my clothes – who could be angry with her at such a time and in such a place? I am sure I could not.

We can hardly expect the same charitable attitude from Mr Gastric Juice:

Got out of the dockyard at length. Walked about. Got on to a place called Mount Wise – just as wise when we got here as when we started. Couldn't tell which was Plymouth and which was Devonport. Gave it up. Walked down to the beach. Took a boat, sailed to the breakwater, looked about, walked about, picked up sea weed, got wet sitting down on a wet piece of sea weed – got up again. Helped that girl Amelia to collect shells – had maggots in 'em, I think – call 'em fish no doubt. Some people would call it a fine view.

A young friend of mine, Sugar Face, would go into raptures at it if he were here. Stupid ass, that fellow. Face always smiling, manner always so polite. A fellow that takes things easy, as he calls it. But got a sort of sneaking kindness for that chap – did me a service once. Never forget a service; never do one. He'd go into raptures, as I said. He'd start off directly he saw it into exclamations of delight. He'd fold his hands and look and look and talk rubbish which he calls sentiment, about nature's poetry, heaven, earth, sea & sky, to which I say: "Rubbish!"

Bound to say he knows all about the breakwater. In no time he'll tell you when it was begun, when finished, how many stones in it, its length, breadth, height & width, and all its statistics. Hate statistics. Hate fact. Hate figures.

Snuffed up the wind, which was from the east. You'll say the ass does that! Well, what then! I am an ass! I'm an ass for coming here at all – just to look at a great heap of stones that's all. Then again I'm an ass to let that girl Amelia splash me with salt water, spoil my clothes. She hasn't got to buy 'em, don't you see. Its human nature – as long as a man (or a woman) hasn't got to pay for a thing, he don't care how he uses it. Look at your 'gentleman' in a first class railway carriage – puts his dirty boots on the cushions of course, especially if nobody is in the carriage with him. Would he do it in his own carriage? Not he. Then again look at your 'lady' at the Exhibition. Go into the Austrian Room and look at her sopping two handkerchiefs in the Eau de Cologne that's given away. D'ye think they'd do so if they had to pay for it? Not a bit. They'd call it waste and extravagance. Pshaw! Selfishness is at the root of everything said or done in the world – it's the mainspring. It sets it all going. Beggar my Neighbour is not a game of cards only – depend upon it.

On their return to shore, they walked up onto the Parade on Mount Wise and Sugar Face, whilst acknowledging the *capital view*, was puzzled about the topography, noting that *Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport adjoin one another and jut out here and run out here into the Sound, so that I was fairly beaten in attempting to form a correct notion of the place.* In fact the three adjoining settlements extended about three miles from east to west and had around 90,000 inhabitants.[45]

We saw up here an enormous brass gun taken from the Turks by Sir John Duckworth[46], continues Sugar Face: *Saw a heap of Cannon balls by the gun but what they were placed there for I couldn't make out; judging from them, which were 24 pound shot, the gun must have carried 150 pounds.*

Gastric Juice, at this juncture, engages the sentry in conversation: *Tried to be facetious – weighed one in my hand. Compared 'em to apple dumplings. Told him one would be enough for his dinner. He grinned of course – couldn't help it. Walked away in raptures at my own wit. Positively I'm afraid my trip is doing me good – don't feel half so splenetic – cursed pity – I'm never happy except when I'm miserable.*

Whilst Sugar Face then reports that *We took the omnibus on our return to dinner,* Gastric Juice's version gives no clue about the mode of return but tells us that he *squabbled with Amelia about the right way back –*

[45] White, W.: *op. cit*., pp.632-3.

[46] Vice-Admiral Sir John Duckworth (1747/8 - 1817) distinguished himself against the French in European waters and in the Caribbean. Towards the end of his career he was second in command of the Mediterranean fleet and was involved in the Dardanelles Operation in 1807. (http://www.answers.com/topic/dardanelles-operation 4.3.07.) When the Royal Naval Asylum, a boarding school for children of seamen lost or injured in action, moved into new accommodation in the facilities formerly occupied by The National Maritime Museum (at Greenwich), there was a formal opening on 21st October 1807 (Trafalgar Day) and… a large Turkish cannon, captured from the island of Kinaliada in the Sea of Marmara by Admiral Duckworth on 27 February 1807 was presented by the Duke of Cumberland. The cannon, decorated by the Royal Arsenal with plaques commemorating the great sea battles that led to the establishment of the Asylum, is now on display defending the main entrance to The Royal Hospital School, Holbrook, Suffolk. (http://www.mariners-l.co.uk/GreenwichRoyal.html 23.4.07.)

got the worst of it of course – her tongue as shrill as a shrew's. Somebody will find that out some day. No matter!

After dinner, they went up onto Plymouth Hoe and Gastric Juice had problems with Amelia again: *Had to drag that girl up. She's always affectionate up hill. Takes my arm and smiles. Tries to look amicable. Don't succeed though – I'm up to her – found her out long ago*.

Sugar Face waxes enthusiastic: *We walked up to the Hoe, an elevation from whose summit (which forms a splendid promenade carpeted with green) may be enjoyed one of the most diversified panoramas of nature and art that the most brilliant imagination could picture. The eye turns from one beautiful object to feast upon another, which gives place to a third and that to a fourth until the circle of view is completed and you begin afresh the contemplation of its loveliness with a sense that never tires. We were there about sunset and the evening gun which boomed from the citadel at the eastern end warned us to return home as we had to make ready for our journey to Totnes.*

Of this journey[47], Gastric Juice writes: *Slept in the carriage – one hour and ten minutes going 24 miles – It's monstrous! I'll write to the directors that I will. No I won't, I'll go to bed.*

But according to Sugar face: *We arrived here about ¼ to 8 in the evening, delighted with our day's excursions and grateful for the pleasures that we had experienced.*

"Well now Sugar Face my dear fellow what do you say after all this? – You mustn't go to bed without saying something."

"Why the fact is", I replied, "I have nothing more to say, it's all down already – to be sure I might have spun a longer yarn by describing this or that particular object but that is not my purpose as you know; I don't want to tire the patience of people (perhaps you'll say I've done that already) by spinning long yarns about what would never interest them. I want to give a general view of what I see with only the most striking particulars, together with the impressions and feelings with which they inspire me. Holloa! – There! Why, bless me, you're asleep as I'm a sinner – well then, good night, pleasant dreams" – with which I shook myself by the hand, took the candle and went to bed.

[47] by the South Devon Railway.

Chapter 3

In which even Mr Gastric Juice finds no fault with the ham at the Seymour Hotel, Totnes, or with the scenery on the Dart, but reaches 'the brink of despair' in the London Hotel, Torquay.

Totnes

Sunday 26th October

Sugar Face awakes in good humour, as ever:

On looking out of my bedroom window this morning I perceived that the Seymour Hotel,[48] *our resting place, was built along the left bank of the Dart. A stone bridge, well built, crosses the stream close by and leads up the principal street of Totnes. We attended service at the old church.*[49] *I was struck with the motley and unpleasing appearance of the interior. It appears that an enlargement has just been completed – sadly out of harmony with the old portion of the church. The newness of look and white paint of the new part contrasted forcibly with the dimness and dust of the old; still more did the richly decorated Corinthian columns appear out of keeping when compared with the antique and quaint carving close by. A very richly carved oak screen, however, did considerable service in somewhat softening down this inconsistency, as it was placed exactly where the old left off and the new began. The pulpit was of stone, curiously painted in the panels.*

The church had been disastrously restored by Sir G. Gilbert Scott who, as the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould puts it: 'had no feeling for Perpendicular work'.[50]

Outside, the church has a very venerable appearance, the tower reminding me of the worn and dilapidated look of Chester cathedral. It is situated in the principal street and, in going and returning, we had to pass under a curious old gateway. Near this, stands the ruins of the old castle, said to have been built by Judha de Totnais[51]*, on whom the Manor was bestowed at the Conquest. Strolled back over the bridge into Bridgetown, as they call the other side of the stream, and walked up one or two narrow lanes into a field, from which we had a capital view of the town.*

In 1851, Totnes and Bridgetown had a population of about 4600 and, according to White in 1851, 'the beauty of the surrounding neighbourhood, and the fine scenery of the Dart and its creeks below the town,

[48] A 'large and well conducted establishment' according to White, W.: *op. cit.*, pp.502-3.
[49] St. Mary's.
[50] Baring-Gould, S.: *Devon*, (1899), Anthony Mott, London, 1983, p. 318.
[51] *Judhael* or *Joel de Totneis,* according to White, W., *op. cit*., pp. 502-3.

will always ensure for Totnes and its vicinity a genteel resident population, and a constant influx of strangers to visit these attractions.[52]

We had to dine at two o'clock, therefore quickly returned and afterwards sallied out again. This time we went in the opposite direction, retracing our steps in the morning, only we went further, climbing a steep hill from whose summit we had another view of the town and surrounding country.

Our walk was rather fatiguing, being after dinner, but there is a spirit that carries the tourist through many difficulties that would be accounted insurmountable under ordinary circumstances.

After this we walked in a circuitous route to the town again and took up our quarters for the night, not without visiting the 'Island', which has been planted and made into a garden for the inhabitants through the munificence of the Duke of Somerset. I felt highly gratified with my day's sojourn at Totnes and would have liked to have prolonged my stay, to visit many interesting localities in the vicinity, but knew that we should not have been able, without leaving out of our intended route many places that we intended to see.

I can recommend the Seymour Hotel for comfort, moderate charges and obliging hostess. We certainly lived in clover here – such Clotted Cream! Devonshire Cider! And Home Cured ham! "Sugar face, my boy, you were in luck – you felt it and you did justice to the delicious fare". And so did my dear Amelia. I was delighted to see her enjoy herself, she bore me such good company! I must confess to a weakness I have for good living when travelling. I think of a "good dinner" on the top of a coach and meditate on a "tea" in the railway carriage. But breakfast!! – It's the meal of the Gods!! And the thought of it when getting up makes my face as round as a full moon.

Gastric Juice, by contrast, naturally finds plenty to grumble about, but is nevertheless seduced into some uncharacteristic compliments by the fare at the Seymour Hotel and even by the quality of the service at St. Mary's:

Oh! That's it, is it, that was making all that noise last night! Disturbing one in that way – that nasty river running under my nose. Ugh! What an ugly looking bridge that is too.

Let me see, it's Sunday morning – go to church I suppose – take that girl with me. Had breakfast – how that girl ate to be sure – never left off for three quarters of an hour. Wasn't in the slightest degree better than that girl – ate like a pig – couldn't help it. No more could she – abused each other about it the whole time. Then went to church – 'Read mark learn and inwardly digest' – felt the full force of that sentence now for first time.

Got to church – charity sermon of course. Always a charity sermon when I go to a strange church – don't know how it is – always is so – it's my luck I suppose. It's why the pew openers are so civil to me. Put one into a vacant seat – plenty of vacant seats – always are at charity sermons. Gentleman not well. Lady got a sick headache. So they can't go to church you see. All at once, on Monday, they find out it was a charity sermon. Then they simper. If they had only known, they'd have gone under any circumstances. Hypocrites! Sermon an hour long. Text 'Who hath despised the day of small things?'[53] *Preacher couldn't tell – I couldn't tell. Good sermon nevertheless. Heard many worse in my time, and I've heard a good many now.*

Clergyman catechised the boys – rather affecting – done on purpose of course to shew their proficiency. Don't hear such voices every day – such innocent voices. Like children's voices – only thing in all the world I do like. No guile there – stream as pure as the fountain stream of life and gushing fresh from the fountain of Love. It's the incense from the altar. The incense of happiness and joy from the heart of infancy. The voice of a child is but the celestial tones of being but lately arrived from the Eternity that's passed. (What ever is the matter with you, Gastric Juice ?!)

[52] White, W.: *op. cit.*, pp. 502-3.
[53] Zechariah 4 v.10.

Gave something – makes you feel comfortable – makes you feel philanthropic, don't it? What is philanthropy? There's Lady Mawkish. What's her idea of it? I'll tell you. She goes out collecting subscriptions for providing worsted stockings for the wooden legs of the Chelsea pensioners, or blankets for the poor savages of Central Africa – and there are a hundred other things. Begin once – I'd never leave off – I'd get excited besides – and its Sunday. Wont do at all!

Church over, rambled about, looked at the views. Went to the Hotel – that stupid girl ordered dinner at 2 o'clock – consequence was, couldn't eat anything to speak of. Waste of money – didn't want dinner at all. That Mrs Bishop gives us good fare – such a ham for breakfast! Gave me a bright idea. It would settle the Jew question directly – cut the Gordian Knot[54] *at once, Send one privately to Rothschild! He'd never resist it! He couldn't do it! No mortal could. It would make a Christian of him at once. Bound to say Lord John's never thought of it.*

Jews believe they are forbidden to eat pork or ham, in Torah: Leviticus 11 v.7. The Qur'an takes the same line but so also does the Bible, in Deuteronomy 14 v.8, so it is doubtful whether a Christian should have felt justified in eating Mrs Bishop's excellent ham! Lionel de Rothschild, the Jewish banker, stood for parliament in 1847, with a Jewish Emancipation agenda. He was elected as one of three City of London M.P.s with only a few hundred less votes than the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell. His Gordian Knot was that, in order to take his seat, he had to take an oath on the Bible. The problem was only solved 11 years later, through some subtle re-wording by Disraeli.[55]

After dinner, up hill – what a weight that girl is! Top of hill – looked about – disgusted with everything – came down and had tea – squabbled with Amelia and went to bed.

Monday 27th October

Mr Sugar Face takes up the story:

I learned yesterday that 'there was a tide in the affairs of Totnes which, taken at the flood, leads on to – Dartmouth'.[56] *In other words, dear reader, I found that a passage boat left here every tide at high water for Dartmouth. Consequently, as this said tide happened at 9 o'clock this morning, I determined to avail myself of it on my onward journey. Hitherto everything has proved propitious – the weather has been heavenly and now, in a matter of 'Time and tide' which proverbially 'wait for no man'*[57]*, we have it all as if previously arranged by some magician's power. That power, oh Sugar Face, is thy luck, call it what you will, and long may it befriend thee.*

Such were my thoughts as I gazed upon the stream while engaged in that disagreeable occupation of getting up. Relieved in some measure by the above reflections, I contemplated the mists of night gradually dispelled by the rising sun, whose genial beams shed o'er Nature pure delight and brought joy to me – another 'rising son'.

If any reader will pardon the miserable attempt at a joke just perpetrated and smile graciously when I do like that again, he will perhaps go on with me – I have a sad habit of joking when I'm happy. I can't help it – I was born with it. And it would be as easy to prevent yeast from fermenting as me from joking. I hope under every circumstance I may never appear ill bred. 'Ill bread'! There I go again .

We started at the appointed hour with two stout rowers in front, two respectable dames, a peripatetic vendor of crockery and crystal, a carpenter, and a nondescript labouring sort of man, nine in all.

Although our company was not of the most refined character, as may be inferred from the above, yet no one felt out of place, no one felt constrained in that two hours row (for a journey of 10 miles)[58]*. Every one*

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[54] i.e. solve an insoluble problem. A myth associated with Alexander the Great who, it was prophesied, would conquer Asia Minor if he managed to untie the Gordian Knot - which he did.

[55] http://www.rothschildarchive.org/ib/?doc=/ib/articles/BW2aJourney 5.3.07.

[56] "There is a tide in the affairs of men / Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." So says Brutus, in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

[57] An ancient proverb, variously attributed, e.g. to St. Marher, 1225. (http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/384000.html 5.3.07.)

joined in the conversation in turn and I should say that, altogether, more genuine natural politeness was displayed in that motley assemblage than can be met with in many a fine London drawing room. This is as it should be – there is in human nature an adaptability which, if allowed to have its full play, will render a man comfortable under all circumstances. The antithesis to this is to be found in a London omnibus.

A London Omnibus evidently demanded much of a gentleman's adaptability. The conductors had a reputation for rudeness and some travellers seemed not to know how to behave, so that *The Times,* in January 1836, printed a list of suggestions (evidently for their male readers), including:

Keep your feet off the seats.

Do not get into a snug corner yourself and then open the windows to admit a north-wester upon the neck of your neighbour.

Sit with your limbs straight, and do not let your legs describe an angle of forty-five, thereby occupying the room of two persons.

Do not spit on the straw, you are not in a pig-sty but in an omnibus.

Behave respectfully to females, and put not an unprotected lass to the blush, because she cannot escape from your brutality.

Reserve bickerings and disputes for the open field …

Refrain from affectation and conceited airs. …[59]

But let us rejoin Sugar Face:

Borne by the tide and impelled by the lusty strokes of our boatmen, we made the journey in two hours. The morning mists had fled, the sun shone brightly, the water was as smooth as a polished mirror. Rooks wheeled overhead in circling flight, filling the air with their discordant cry, and now a heron with its black-tipped wing skims the surface forming a bright object against the dark background. The trees in all the panoply of Autumn's tints slope gently down the hills and touch the water's edge. A bend in the river next – the boatman calls and wakes the silvery echo, sporting with the Goddess of this Sylvan Scene: a fanciful conversation is maintained in tones of most bewitching harmony – sweet Echo! Long shall I remember thee as thou spoke while thine enchanted bower faded from my sight.

The Dart is assuredly a most beautiful river – it takes its devious path between high hills generally clothed with trees from their summits and appears to be a succession of lakes, so deceptive are its windings. From some point in its course, Sharpham Hill I believe, no less than ten apparently isolated bits of water can be seen, appearing to be just so many different lakes.

This is considered to be its chief beauty – new combinations of scenery are displayed at every turn and the eye never has to dwell long upon one object. Many mansions, peeping through the trees, can be discerned, besides one or two villages – one especially, Stoke Gabriel, is delightfully situated in a little cove out of the river itself and appears nestled among the trees, a perfect little picture of content and cosy comfort. The two hours passed rapidly as our eyes drank in their picturesque banquet and we landed at the quay at Dartmouth delighted with our trip.

Mr Gastric Juice, however, got out of bed on the wrong side as usual:

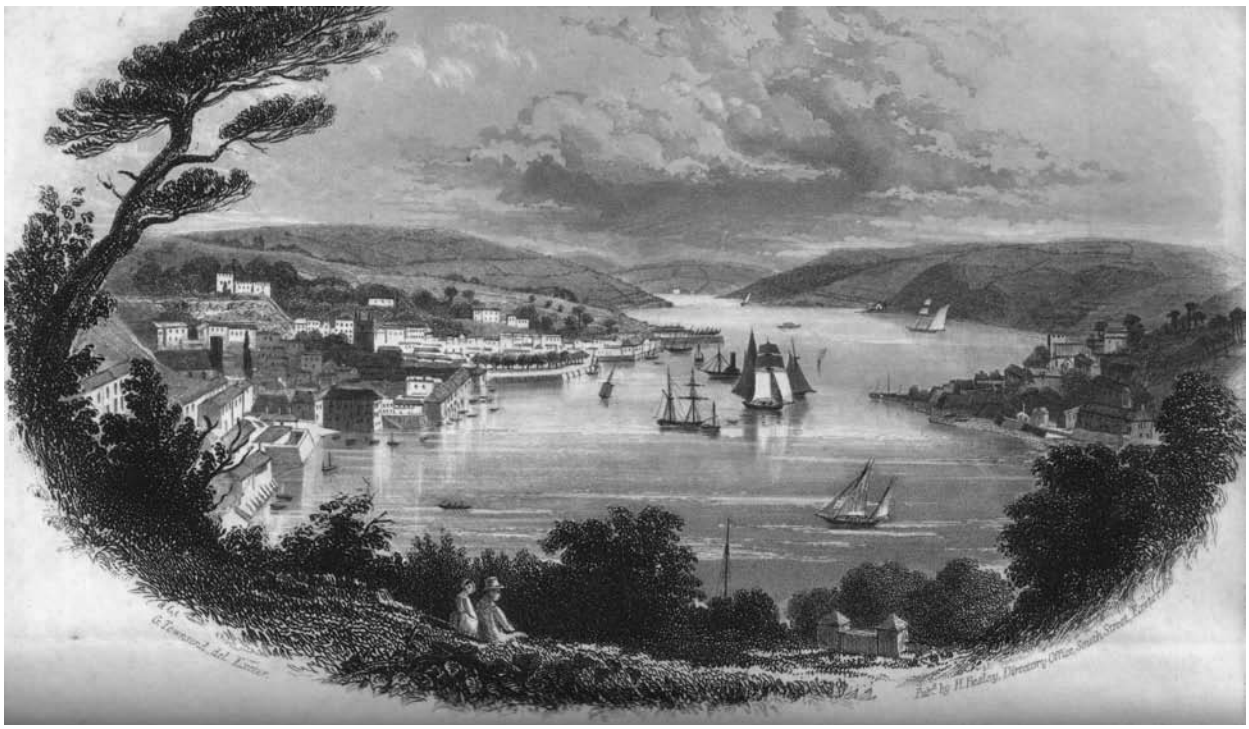
Was awake at the disagreeably early time of 7 this morning. I hate that hour of all others – don't mind getting up at 5 or 6, but 7 is neither the one thing nor the other. Found out presently why I had to wake at 7 – got to go to Dartmouth.

A raw morning. Ugh! What a fog – beats London hollow.

Had breakfast, paid the bill and begged Mrs Bishop to send me a ham. If I've got a weakness, it's for a fine ham! I'll keep pigs some day, if its only for their hams – it won't save their bacon though, for all that.

[58] According to White, they could have taken a steam packet - but perhaps not at the right time of day. (White: *op. cit*., p.502.)

[59] Sparkes, I.: *op. cit.*, pp. 145-6.



Dartmouth

Got into the boat to go down the Dart. Been told it's the most beautiful river in England. Got all my powers of admiration ready for the occasion. Always necessary to get up to steam in that way – especially if you're with ladies. You're thought an insensate pig and remarkably stupid if you don't keep making the stereotyped exclamations of delight.

Thought at first we were to have the journey all to ourselves – was quickly undeceived. How unutterably selfish is mankind. Here we were, about to have a lovely row, eleven miles down a magnificent river for a shilling a piece, and this was all the men got for their fare, and yet we wanted the boat all to ourselves. What did I care about the boatmen!? It's the same all over the world.

Five people got in, besides ourselves, among them a travelling seller of plates, glass and china ornaments – a good natured amusing dry sort of a fellow. Rather pleased with him – talked to him a little; made sapient observations about his trade; asked him if it wasn't dangerous to carry about such a load as his basket (which was crammed and piled up to an alarming extent). Told me "No" – had met with an accident only once, and that was coming round that corner (pointing to a wall by the place of embarkation). "My foot slipped," continued he, "and the whole came down – such a smash". Couldn't help laughing. What's so amusing as another man's misfortunes? Poor fellow, I couldn't help pitying him too – he didn't appear to see the joke as I did – singular! Well!

Started off at last, after waiting a quarter of an hour for two women. Women always keep one waiting. We all looked at one another – dead silence broken by the sound of the oar only. At length the horrid fog went away – sun came out – thought he'd have a look at us I suppose. Well, he seemed to thaw us a little. Somebody made a remark – one of the boatman I believe – some meteorological observation: "Fine Morning". Heard this seventeen times in two hours! Somebody else made a remark. It was a 'find morning', he said. Then we relapsed into silence. All this time Minnie and I sat in the stern sheets, as grumpy as possible.

Conversation got more – general gossip of the place the uppermost topic now – and then one of the boatmen would condescend to give us a little information about the places as we passed them. Pretended to be highly interested in all they told us – wouldn't have been polite to have appeared otherwise. The scenery positively was pretty – how rarely do the descriptions of enthusiastic voyagers portray correctly the scenes they pretend to represent! Think it always more pleasant to come and find it all out for yourself.

Came to a bend in the river. Boatman facetious – "Hoigh there"! shouted he. "Hoigh there," said someone on the bank. "How Far?" roared Boaty. "How far"! said Woody. "Dartmouth"! "Dartmouth!". "Who! hoigh-up!" "Who! hoigh-up!". And the fellow yelled and whooped like a Red Indian. Saw it was an echo. Heard of many finer than this – the Irishman's for instance which, when you say "Are you there Paddy?", replies: "Here I am yer honour".

As regards Dartmouth, Gastric Juice dismisses it as *a hole of a place – what Sugar Face would call "a locality replete with historical associations".* And even Sugar Face is in fact initially not greatly enthusiastic:

Dartmouth itself has nothing to recommend it to the notice of the traveller except its remote antiquity – the curious old carved houses – especially their quaintly graven images of a lion, a unicorn and a griffin that may be seen on many of the houses.

According to White[60], 'the stranger accustomed to the straight, monotonous fronts of modern streets, will be much struck with the projecting fronts, carved brackets, and antique gables of Dartmouth, where many of the houses are of the Elizabethan and earlier ages.' Britton and Brayley, writing twenty years earlier, however, seem to have much the same architectural prejudices as our friends: 'Dartmouth, as a town, possesses little to recommend it; the houses are in general mean and irregularly built, but among them are some curious old dwellings, the fronts of which display grotesque carvings in wood, gable-ends, and enriched cornices … the streets are inconveniently narrow …' But they concede that 'on the adjacent heights are several excellent residences.'[61]

Leaving our luggage at the Castle Inn we walked through the long narrow streets of the town up to an eminence behind them. The streets put me in mind of those in eastern cities – people in the top stories could shake hands with each other, so close were they, and they are built in the same way, running parallel with each other, along the mountain side, so that the tops of the houses in one street were level with the pavement of the one above it. Access is had by steps.

We reached the brow of the hill at length and were amply repaid for our toil by a splendid view. To the left lay Dartmouth and the river bending inland. Opposite was the little town of Kingswear, built on a jutting point of land – it is supposed to be older than Dartmouth itself – a little to the right (still on the opposite shore) are the remains of an old castle and opposite them stand the present Dartmouth Castle.

Below us was a cove and a village. The water altogether forms a magnificent harbour – sufficiently deep to swim the largest ship in Her Majesty's Navy. It was one of the finest views I ever had.

But Sugar Face lacks the level of enthusiasm expressed by the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould: 'I cannot think that I have ever seen any sight lovelier than Dartmouth on an evening in early summer, with Kingswear opposite, the one bathed in soft sweet shadow, and the other glittering and golden in the sun's declining rays.'[62]

We returned to the Castle Inn much pleased and after lunch booked our places outside the omnibus to Torquay. It was long a matter of conjecture with Minnie and myself how the omnibus would get across the river and our curiosity was still further piqued when we asked our Waiting Maid how it would. She was not a very bright one and answered "by the bridge". I then asked: "Is the bridge further down then?" – "No Sir its higher up". This was a puzzler. We were sure we had seen no bridge since we had left Totnes and of course we were not going back there. We could not make it out at all! Time and patience did it for us. What the girl called "a bridge" was nothing more than a sort of ferry boat worked across the stream by two blind horses who turn round a cog wheel which turns a spindle with two rollers round whose serrated edges two chains worked. These chains are stretched across the stream and form both the towing ropes and guide ropes of the whole concern. We went slowly across in 8 minutes by the horses going round inside it, the vessel appearing to drag itself along by the chains. Omnibus and all went on board – one of the horses was rather restive and kicked.

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[60] White, W.: *op. cit*., p.485.
[61] Britton, J. & Brayley, E.: *op. cit*.
[62] Baring-Gould, S.: *op. cit*., p.325.

For Gastric Juice, this river crossing was a good deal more traumatic:

Got on to the omnibus. Driver put me in a dreadful fear of my life, galloping up and down hill as if he were on a level road, and in such narrow streets! Positively thought I should have been decapitated or suffered amputation of the arm, he went so excruciatingly close to the projecting door tops, balconies and other things sticking out of the houses. Was told afterwards he was known as the fastest and most furious driver on the road.

Couldn't for the life of me make out how we should get to the other side of the Dart until we got to the water's edge – then couldn't make it out. Coachman wrangled with some people on the river side. Heard something about the bridge being out of order – broken cog-wheel or something of that sort. Couldn't see a bridge anywhere – and then couldn't make out what a bridge had to do with a cog-wheel. Matter cleared up at last. Saw a lumbering thing, a great barge partially roofed, lugging itself to the shore by two great chains – and this is what they call a bridge! Omnibus tried to get on board, horses began to kick, Amelia got frightened – we were outside passengers. She clutched my arm with a convulsive grasp – got the mark to this day, I'm sure. Omnibus stuck fast between the mud and the boat. Horses didn't like it – one of 'em kicked just to shew his opinions – the other not so clever – didn't kick. The kicker consequently was taken out – just what he wanted! The other poor brute left to pull the omnibus by himself. This is an exemplification of the old saw: "They always impose upon the willing horse".

Passage across awfully slow, the poor blind animals, bearing distant resemblance to horses, were patiently walking round and round inside the covered part of this clumsy ferry. Wonder what they thought of life. We did get over at last – took twenty minutes at least. Occupied myself in examining the machinery – thought it contemptible in the highest degree. The journey up hill, after leaving the boat, for a long distance. Man whipped his horses incessantly – Kicker obliged to work hard now.

Let us return to Mr Sugar Face's account for the next part of the ride:

We had a merry ride to Torquay through Brixham. I computed the distance to be 15 miles. Leaving the Dart behind, we ascended to a considerable elevation above its level, passing through the most cultivated districts. We caught occasional views of the coast and the sea whose breeze one felt, bracing and refreshing after the mild atmosphere we had breathed of late. We passed Sir John's Buller's place – an exquisite spot – also his carriage, a very beautiful turn out. There appeared to be only one person inside – a lady.

Sir John Yarde-Buller, M.P. for South Devon, 1835-58, lived at Lupton House, 'a large and handsome mansion, with well wooded grounds', about a mile west of Brixham church, according to White's Devonshire Directory of 1850. [63]

Upon our arrival at Torquay we put up at the London Hotel (a Posting House, in Fleet Street)[64], *recommended to us by the coachman – but am sorry we came here as the house is not first rate.*

Gastric Juice takes a much more jaundiced view of the rest of the day, of course:

The rest of the journey I didn't care a fig about. Passed through Brixham – the head quarters of the Devonshire fisheries. Didn't think much of the place. Every respectable looking woman was in mourning – couldn't make it out.

In 1850, Brixham had 'more than 270 sail of vessels, comprising 20,000 tons of shipping, and employing about 1600 seamen', according to White, with an average quantity of 150 tons per week of fish brought to the quay, sometimes rising to as much as 350 tons. [65] The catch included 'turbot, soals, plaice, whiting, mackerel, thornback, gurnet, flounders, and many other kinds of fish'.[66]

Skirted the coast for some miles – awfully cold. Met a splashing turn out, four horses in plated harness, two postilions[67] and two footmen, all in the most beautiful style – and all for what? One woman inside! – Wonder who she was! Lady Buller, I suppose as the carriage was Sir Buller's. If so she ought to be

[63] White, W.: *op. cit*., p.424; http://www.thepeerage.com/p4361.htm#i43607 14.5.07.
[64] White, W.: *op. cit*., p.451.
[65] Ibid, p. 425.
[66] Britton, J. & Brayley, E.: *op. cit*.
[67] Men riding horses that are drawing a carriage.

ashamed of herself – I blushed for her and for humanity – 4 men, 4 horses and a carriage to take care of one precious woman! Its my decided opinion it ought to be exactly the other way. Ask my Turkish friend Shah Yalla Berry Kickup Effendi.

Got to Torquay. Couldn't see anything of the place for the best of reasons – darkness. So we put up at once at the London Hotel which the driver recommended. Disgusted with the place in 5 minutes. Couldn't help it – caught in a trap. Smelt of stale punch and beer. Determined to get away first thing in the morning. If ever I meet that driver again I'll make him feel the weight of my …my tongue, that I will. Afraid to kick him, he being at least 6 feet 2 in his stockings.

Went to bed after sundry consultations with Amelia, who declared she would not go to bed. She told me there was no lock to her room door – this put her on the key vive[68]*, and me too. Looked at my door – found there was none. Began to feel alarmed. Took the candle – looked under the bed expecting to find some one underneath – no – didn't expect to find anyone there, or you may be sure I wouldn't have looked. Several cupboards in the place – had horrible misgivings. Opened one and started back – full of lumber. Opened another – ditto – and another – same result. Felt reassured somewhat – hate cupboards. Undressed, and was about to get into bed – all of a sudden, thought of the door! Oh that horrid door! Thought of battle, murder and sudden death – I am so dreadfully nervous, when once I begin. "Here's a pretty go", I said to myself, "It's all up with you this time, Mr G. J."* (What about poor Amelia?!)

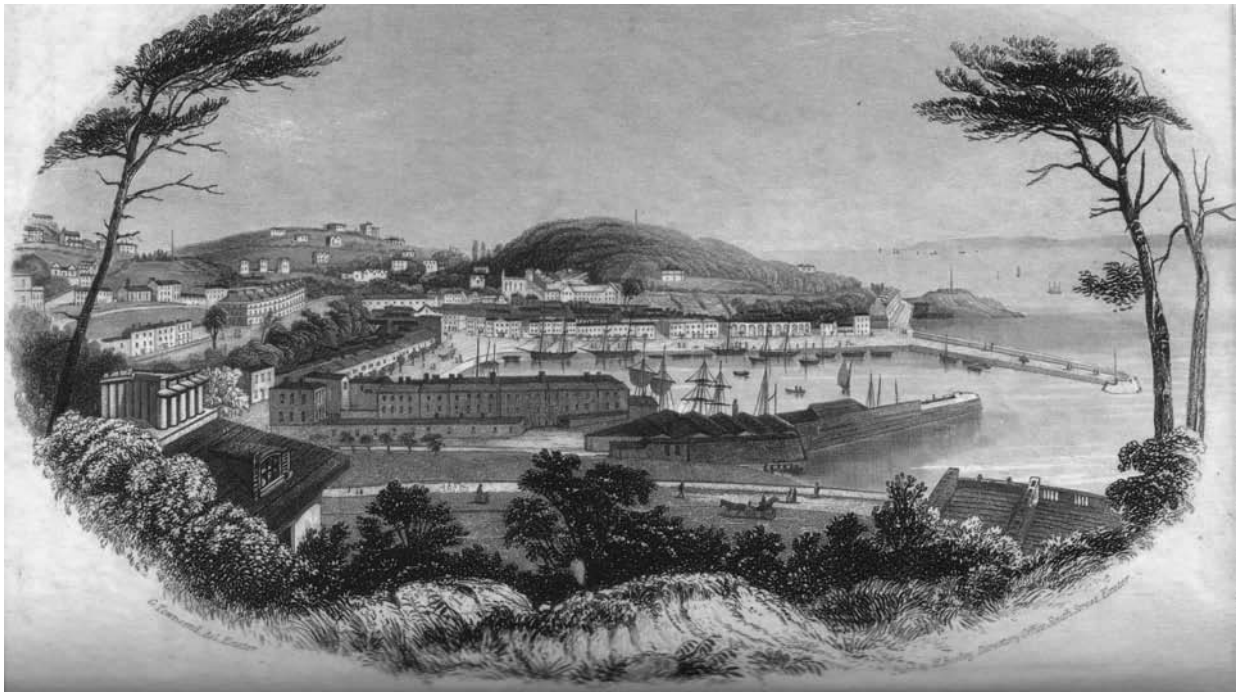
Sat down in a state of despondency. Was on the brink of despair when I had a happy idea! Suppose I barricade the door. There was genius and invention for you! Began to set about it with great alacrity. Got a chair – put it an inch from the door – got another – turned him upside down and gently balanced him on the other. Then I turned up the corner of the carpet – make more noise if it fell down – all capitally arranged. "Now you murdering thieves", said I, "I shall know when you're coming at all events."

Got into bed – thought of the horrible stories I'd ever heard of people robbed and murdered in wayside inns. Recollected all at once that they had trap doors in some places which the bed went down into! Horrors! Horrors! I hadn't looked to see! What if I should be let down through a trap door and wake up and find my throat cut! Ugh! Ugh! Shook with terror. Thought I'd lie awake and act according to circumstances – did so for some time. Got sleepy. Felt dreadfully drowsy. Started! Had a dim of idea of that six feet two coachman and a carving knife. That fellow must be a villain, I'm positive. Thought I saw his ugly face leering at me. Talked to myself to keep awake. Frightened of my own voice. Muttered instead – horribly sleepy – eyelids would not keep open – heavy as lead. "I'll … I'll… just sh…ut them – for – little while – only – five minutes and then I'll …" Snork!! Fast asleep.

[68] A pun on 'Qui vive?' - 'Who goes there?'

Chapter 4

In which Mr Gastric Juice finds that his throat has not been cut during the night in Torquay but has another nightmare in Teignmouth.



Torquay

Tuesday October 28th

We will leave Gastric Juice to sleep off his nightmares for a bit and follow Sugar Face's account of his Tuesday morning in Torquay, 'the Queen of Watering Places, and the Montpellier of England'.[69]

Further reflection on the matter, and experience, that great teacher of mankind, convinced us that, in coming to the London Hotel, we had made a mistake. But what was done couldn't be helped. We determined to put the best face on the matter but get away as soon as we could. As soon as breakfast was over, I called for the bill and sallied out to look for a proper place to put up at, which our last night's lodging was not, for reasons that I will tell of presently.

I found out Hearder's Hotel and, calling one of the many carriages plying for hire, we were soon borne away from our uncomfortable quarters.

Hearder's Hotel was on Victoria Parade, also classed a Posting House but, according to White's Devonshire Directory of 1850, a 'Family Hotel' where there was 'a spacious Subscription Reading and News Room'[70].

We then walked out in search of the Picturesque. We turned to the left on leaving the hotel and passed many handsome looking shops fronting the sea; then walked up a sloping rock, covered with green on the land side but a mass of precipices on the sea. This eminence is called the Beacon and carries a flag staff. From it a very pretty view of Torquay can be seen – the town containing 10000 inhabitants (3500 in 1841) is built up the sides of hills which, running to the sea, form two confluent valleys. There was a high hill directly opposite us whose top, covered with tall trees, bore an elegant row of houses facing the sea. A reference to the map will make the topography easily understood.

[69] White, W.: *op. cit*., p. 444.
[70] Ibid, p. 447.

According to White's Devonshire Directory of 1850, the population of the parish of Tor Moham 'amounted in 1801 only to 838, and in 1831 to 3582 ; but in 1841 it had increased to 5982 souls, of whom 4085 were in Torquay Chapelry. The parish has now about 9000 inhabitants'. But it had only been reached by a branch of the South Devon Railway in December 1848.[71]

There was the smooth calm bay before us, unruffled by a single wave, and protected from the gale by a headland. Beyond, in the offing[72], were many vessels passing in their various pursuits of pleasure or gain. Immediately below us, some small craft and one or two yachts lay at anchor, studding the bay with their dark forms, while sundry fishing boats stretched across, bearing the nets and other paraphernalia of the trade. Coasters were loading and unloading at the quay itself and the voices of sailors, as they tripped the anchor, were borne to us over the water, having a peculiar and pleasing effect. Such was Torbay – descending from the Beacon, we pursued our ramble up some steep lanes in a vain attempt to get near the sea further on. Access was denied us thereto, houses and their adjacent grounds preventing even our getting a glimpse of the sea.

We were struck by the number and variety of plants and shrubs in full bloom amid these sheltered retreats. The world seems quite excluded from out their leafy bower; a silence reigns around that must be delightfully soothing to the invalids that inhabit these marine villas.

Baffled in our efforts to get at the sea, we retraced our steps and on our way stopped at the workshop of a polisher of stones and madripore. I bought two or three trifling articles which seemed to me pretty. The old man appeared to be an honest old fellow and we were much pleased with him. While we were in conversation, a workman of the sister trade joined us. He was the setter of the pebbles and stones that the other polished. I bought some articles of malachite[73] of him – a considerable trade in these sort of ornaments is carried on here. Besides these working men, there are several shops and manufactories in and near the town which supply them. Most of the madripore is picked up in Babbicombe Bay. These two men seemed very honest straight forward fellows, treating you with great civility, and each other with the most refined politeness. It was evident they had a deep feeling of respect for each other which was displayed at all convenient opportunities.

Madrepore is coral of the reef-building type. There were seven 'Madrepore Mfrs' listed in Torquay and Tor Moham parish in White's Devonshire Directory of 1850[74].

A sour friend of mine, Mr Gastric Juice, would no doubt sneer at all this in his ill-natured way. I have met him several times and always felt uncomfortable: he says such queer things and makes such cynical remarks. He's perpetually thinking you want to take him in and he puts the worst construction on everything you do or say, placing it in a novel point of view that would not appear at first. He says the world's a mockery, man a delusion and woman a snare. That is his style of talking. Whether or not it is his way of thinking I am not certain – I don't think it is – for now and then a better spirit peeps out in spite of him. I put all his ill-natured remarks down to a liver complaint.

Quite so ! Therefore, let us see how Mr Gastric Juice enjoyed his morning in fact:

Woke perfectly astonished to find that positively my throat was <u>not</u> cut – stop a bit, don't be too sure – <u>felt</u> to <u>see</u> (that's a bull[75]) – I can joke now it's all over. Then got up, had my breakfast, called a fly and drove to Hearder's.

Perhaps we should not be surprised that Mr Juice failed to register the walk to the Beacon and the picturesque views of Torquay – however he has woken up properly by the time they get to Torquay itself:

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[71] White, W.: *op. cit*., p. 445.
[72] i.e. the part of the sea furthest from the shore but still visible.
[73] A vibrant green banded mineral (Copper 2 Carbonate Hydroxide).
[74] White, W.: *op. cit*., p. 452.
[75] i.e. 'a ludicrous inconsistency in speech' (*Chambers 20th century dictionary,* 1983).

Torquay is rich in Malachite and Madrepore – we saw beautiful things in the shops. That girl coveted all. Passed a little sort of a workshop, saw he was a polisher of pebbles, chatted with him – fool enough to buy some things of him. Talked about pebble bracelets. That girl Amelia chimed in – saw something to her advantage I suppose. "I polish the stones and this 'ere gen'leman sets 'em" said he, and the gen'leman as sets 'em walked up. Talked to the gen'leman. Went to his workshop. Was fool enough to buy something of him – all that girl's doing.

In looking over Mr George the polisher's articles, saw a piece of ore, asked him what it was. "That's a bit of cobalt and copper Sir, which comed out of a mind in Dartmoor, and it's a beautiful speciment Sir". And so it was. Supposed he meant 'mine' when he said 'mind'. If not, what queer people those Dartmoor people must be – a strong minded and stony hearted set. Was quite amused with the old man. Went back to the hotel and turned to articles "Malachite and Madrepore" in my walking cyclopaedia – in other words, I rang the bell, asked for a glass of water and questioned the waiter.

In the afternoon, there was a new adventure. Mr Sugar Face takes up the story:

Having three hours before us we determined to hire a conveyance and trot somewhere round the bay. A nice little invalid's carriage drawn by a pretty little mule conveniently offered itself into which (the carriage, not the mule) we quickly got and had an hour's pretty ride round the bay to Paignton Sands, about three miles from Torquay. We did not travel at any great pace as may be inferred from the above. Our muleteer walked on foot with the reins over his arm.

From the sands we had a delightful view of Torquay and the bay. We spent half an hour in strolling on the beach gathering pebbles and shells and enjoying the sea breeze which was not, however, what I like best. The climate of South Devon is far too mild and relaxing to suit the temperament of those accustomed to more bracing atmospheres. For those who have the misfortune to possess weak lungs it is invaluable.

However: 'In Frying Pan Lane, Torquay, one may be grilled the same day that at Paignton one may have one's nose and fingers turned blue'.[76]

We then rejoined our little conveyance and were borne homeward at the gentle pace at which we came. Again we were struck by the foliage and bloom. The Arbutus, Rhododendron and Myrtle, and a host of other shrubs rose to a height and luxuriance that you look for in vain in more northern latitudes.

At dinner we were highly amused by our waiter. He was exceedingly chatty and communicative and told us a variety of things about the places most worth seeing in the neighbourhood; he gave us moreover a good deal of information about the madrepore and malachite trade and I was glad to hear from him a corroboration of my opinion of our friend Mr George, the polisher, who he said was the best in Torquay.

Among other subjects, we got into that of our visit and I was astonished to find that he knew of my leaving the London Hotel as I did. I had often heard of the 'Mind your neighbour's business' that exists in all country towns and here was an example of it. It appears that the omnibus driver yesterday deceived us altogether about this London Hotel. The fact is he belongs to the opposition shop over the way – the Royal Hotel – and as that was full he determined we should not go to its rival Hearder's, so he played us the scurvy trick of taking us to a mere Inn. Our waiter said it was not even a Commerical Inn. No traveller from a respected house would put us there – only from a nasty dirty place. He told us more. Amelia heard fiddling in the London last night but couldn't make it out. We now learnt that between 7 and 8 the Music strikes up and anyone going in and ordering a pint of ale or some gin may "dance with the whole town". It was called the Beggar's Opera. I am heartily glad we have got out of the place and I have made up my mind that whenever I meet that mendacious omnibus driver, I will endeavour to impress him with a sense of his misconduct by administering a mild reproof to him.

Mr Gastric Juice barely noticed the Paigton Sands trip in the afternoon, but records a more colourful version of the conversation with the waiter:

Remarkable waiter! – conversational and obliging. He dextrously began thus:

[76] Baring-Gould, S.: *op. cit.*, p.289.

"That's Dartmoor Mutton Sir" – "Indeed" said I.
"Considered a treat to get Dartmoor Mutton Sir" – "Indeed" said I.
"Yes Sir" said he – "It's very small" said I.
"It is Sir" said he – "Don't know that I've ever tasted Dartmoor Mutton before" said I.
"I presume you are a stranger here Sir" – "I am" said I.

Then he took off! It would fill the next two pages besides this to put down his rhapsody on the beauties of Devonshire and the vicinity of Torquay! Endeavoured to seem deeply impressed with what he said – thought he'd soon have done. Done! He spoke for one mortal quarter of an hour! But I began to get as thirsty as Tantalus[77], so as he was going on – "So exquisite so beautiful so natural" – I broke in with: "Some bitter ale if you please", which broke the charm and thereupon he rushed downstairs for the bitter ale.

Amelia and I looked at each other and grinned. He was back in a twinkling – set off again on another tack. Evidently had something on his mind:
"May I presume to ask you who recommended you to stop at the place you put up at last night?"
Well, thought I, how in the world do you come to know I put up anywhere last night? Thought I'd managed the matter very cleverly. Told him so.
"Ah Sir!", said he putting on a look of up-to-everything.
"In these little towns we know everything that goes on – everything, Sir".
"It appears so", said I.
"You managed very well", said he, "but we have a special motive to know why you put up at the London Inn last night. The fact is, we and the place over the way, the Royal, are rivals and I see very well how it is. They've had an influx of visitors last night and, not having rooms for you, sooner than bring you here they took you to the London Hotel. You came in their omnibus by the down train, did you not Sir?"

Told him he was quite wrong. Felt delighted he was wrong. Told him we came from Dartmouth.
"Dartmouth Sir!" cried he and his face elongated with chagrin at his airy story of his rival's manoeuvres having burst.
"You came by Mr John's 'bus then? Ah Sir! He ought to have known better than to have taken you to such a place!"

Sugar Face and Gastric Juice may well have found the correct explanation for having been 'mis-directed' to the London Hotel. Given their rather patronising attitude, however, another possible explanation does come to mind. The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould (he who wrote *Onward, Christian soldiers*), in his delightful reflections on Devon published in 1899, warns that 'The West Country man must be addressed as an equal. He resents the slightest token of approach de haut en bas, but he never presumes; he is always respectful and knows his place; he values himself, and demands, quite rightly, that you shall show that you value him.' He tells the following story:

'The other day, a bicyclist ... not knowing quite where he was, and night approaching, ... saw an old farmer leaning on a gate:
" I say, you Johnnie, where am I ? I want a bed."
"You'm fourteen miles from Wonford Asylum", was the quiet response, "and fourteen from Newton Work'us, and fourteen from Princetown Prison, and I reckon you could find quarters in any o'they – and suitable."[78]

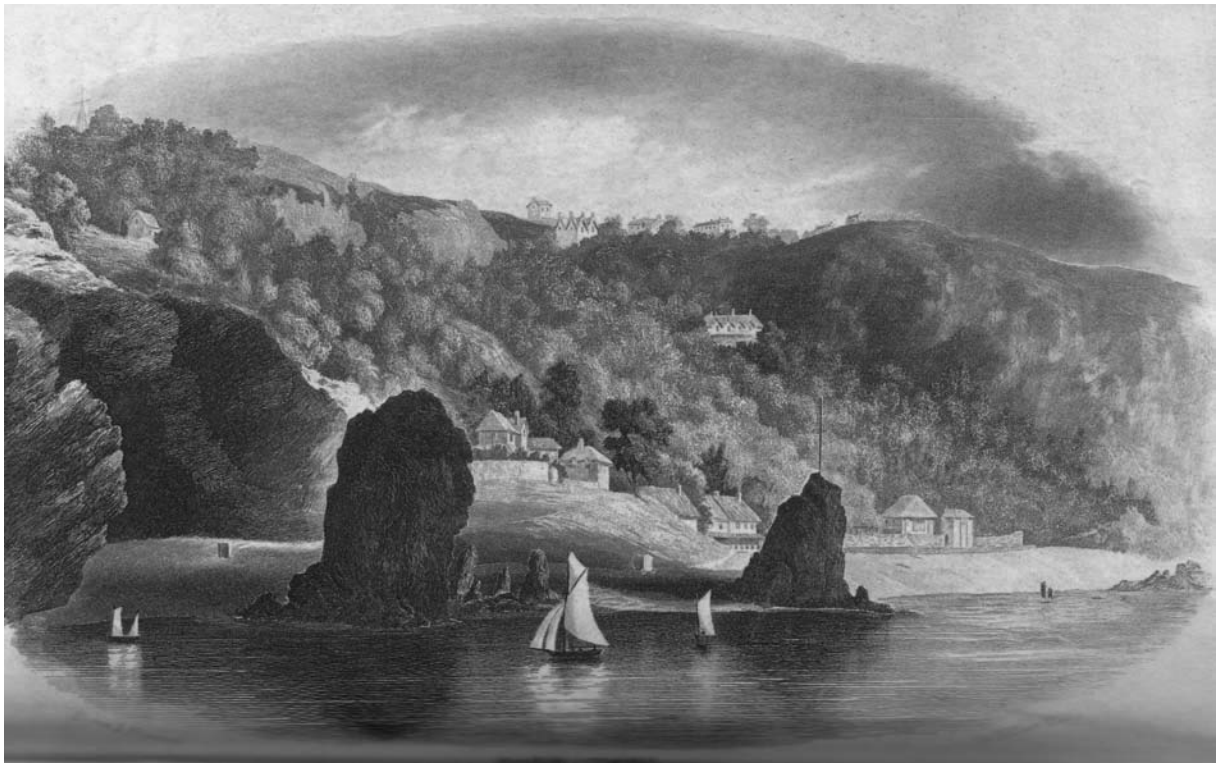
[77] According to Greek mythology, Tantalus was a King who was a son of Zeus but betrayed the Gods' trust. His punishment in Hades is described in the Odyssey: "I also saw the awful agonies that Tantalus has to bear. The old man was standing in a pool of water which nearly reached his chin, and his thirst drove him to unceasing efforts; but he could never get a drop to drink. For whenever he stooped in his eagerness to lap the water, it disappeared. The pool was swallowed up, and all he saw at his feet was the dark earth, which some mysterious power had parched. Trees spread their foliage high over the pool and dangle fruits above his head—pear-trees and pomegranates, apple-trees with their glossy burden, sweet figs and luxuriant olives. But whenever the old man tried to grasp them in his hands, the wind would toss them up towards the shadowy clouds." [Odysseus. in Homer, *Odyssey* 11.584] (http://homepage.mac.com/cparada/GML/Tantalus1.html 6.3.07.)

[78] Baring-Gould, S.: *op. cit.,* pp.16-17.

Wednesday Oct 29th

This was a fairly uneventful day, mainly due to the rain. Mr Sugar Face mentions a morning walk to Babbicombe Bay where they spent *an hour picking up Madrepore or what we took for it* – or, as Mr Gastric Juice puts it: *Filled my pockets with heaps of stones all for that girl and all for nothing* … (and) … *carried our treasures to our old friend Mr George and gave him a little order – to polish 14 stones.* Mr Gastric Juice adds that *nineteen twentieths were good for nothing.*

This and cutting out the patterns that we wished the stones wrought into occupied us all the morning, says Sugar Face.



Babbicombe Bay

Thursday Oct 30

Sugar face sums up the day, up to mid-afternoon, extremely briefly:
After calling upon Mr George for our stones, we set out by the quarter past one train to Teignmouth which we did not reach owing to a detention of the train until a quarter past three.

Gastric Juice has a great deal more to say:
Didn't know what to do this morning – had to wait till that old fellow had polished that rubbish we brought him. So we just called upon him to rub <u>him</u> up a bit. Hard at work were three of 'em. Took up some of old George's time and then walked on to the Beacon. What was the use of that? Saw that twice before. Walked back again.

Looked for the hundredth time into the marble and madrepore shops – I wonder what the people inside thought – they've seen us pass and repass a hundred times and every time we've looked in and pointed at the things as if we had a design to rob 'em. Didn't buy anything. Had a notion everything would be <u>dear</u> and I believe it is so. Much rather go to old George for what I want. Still I didn't know what to do. Went back to hotel, read the paper second time. Paid my bill – tried to look pleasant over it – hate bills – a cursed invention of the Enemy.

Got talkative waiter to brush my hat – did it with great condescension and affability – gave it back with a low bow, as much as to say he was the obliged party. Art of true politeness this – very good thing this politeness, in moderation. Politeness can be too much of a good thing. What d'ye think of sitting in a coach on a hot summer's day with three people inside, windows up, close as I don't know what and you can't put them down – and why? Why, that old lady in the corner there – she's got an idea that a breath of air will give her a cold and she shut the window with a bang directly she came in, and she won't have it down, that she wont! It's your politeness that now sews you up – it's a lady you see!! Cannot offend a lady – that's what I call having too much of a good thing.

After paying bill, didn't know what to do. Pulled out my watch. Tried to look important – asked what time train started. Pretended to be very particular about time – London time or Torquay time? Great difference, I assure you, between 'em. Travelling evidently don't agree with my watch – he hasn't coincided with another of his species since he left London. Very mortifying to him no doubt. Enough to give him the face ache or rheumatism in the hand – complaints he's very liable to, especially when he's excited. He's rather fast too, like a good many young fellows when they've got any gold about 'em – but in his case I'm happy to say that's not the case. He's always on tick, that's all you can say of him. Moreover he goes to bed drunk, some people would say, but that's not the fact – he's only wound up – that's all. I can vouch for it, as I sleep with him every night.

A little relief from Gastric Juice's 'humour' is perhaps in order and provides an opportunity to comment on London time, Torquay time, etc. Of course places in the east start their day earlier than those in the west and so Torquay time is indeed behind London time. There is, in fact, about half an hour's difference in time between the easternmost and the westernmost parts of Britain; Bristol, for instance, is about ten minutes behind London. By the end of the eighteenth century it was normal to use a local mean time rather than sundial time but differences in local mean times were still inconvenient, particularly as communications and travel speeds improved.

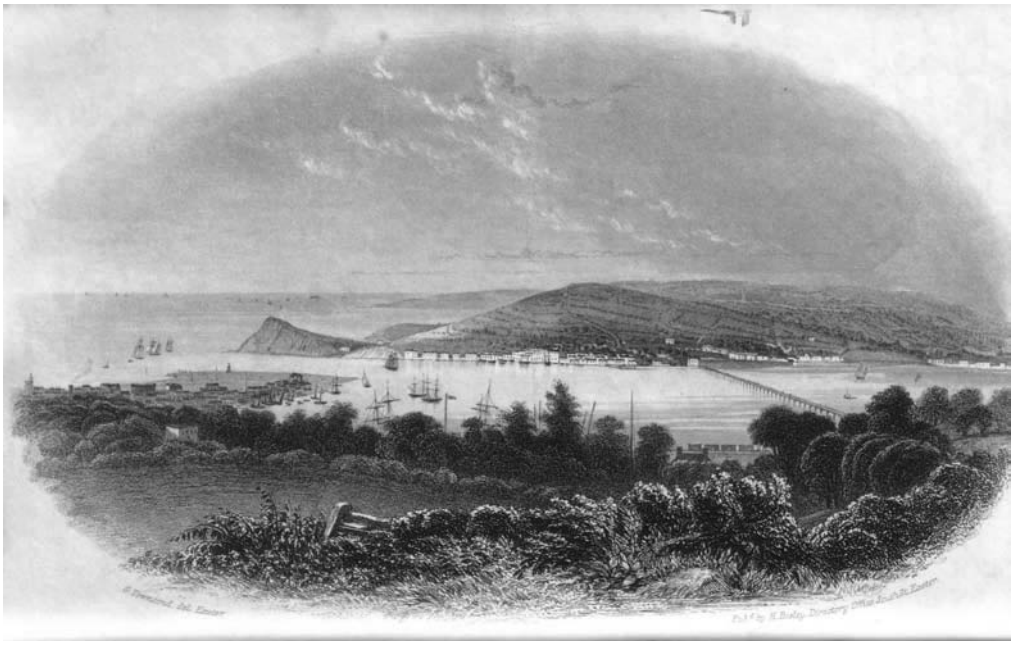
In 1840, the Great Western Railway arranged for London time to be used at all its stations and in its timetables. By 1848, ten railway companies, but apparently not the South Devon railway, were following Greenwich mean time and some public clocks had two minute hands, one showing local time and the other London time. So travellers did need to have their wits about them if they were not to arrive at the station at the wrong time for their train.

Well! Time at last. Settled with old George. Time to start. There's that waiter again – he's everywhere – a bow, a low bow, a very low bow, and we're off to the station. Drat the railways in general and the South Devon in particular! Waited nearly an hour at the junction at Newton. Single line of rails you see – obliged to wait till the 'through' train has passed. Wish it had passed through the officials – it'd train 'em punctuality. Everything comes at last – even an overdue railway train. Then we got on – saw lots of sea fowl on the low mud of the Teign – seemed very happy.

Train wouldn't work at all. Tubes would not be exhausted. Passengers' patience was instead. Still the train wouldn't go on. Best thing was, there was no chance of a collision except between the directors and the shareholders, which was sure to happen. There were explosions, though – of wrath – and a general blow up which happily never resulted in loss of life, though loss of temper.

The first train arrived at Teignmouth six years before, in 1846. A new broad gauge track, laid in 1848, was protected in the vicinity of Teignmouth by a section of sea wall. Even so, storms often damaged the track and, in 1859 the *Illustrated London News* reported: 'Such was the terrific force of the impelled water that along the sea-wall and railway huge coping-stones, probably averaging one ton each, were tossed about like corks and huge fragments of the disjointed wall were rolled up on the metals. The breaking up of the structure is described as having been appalling: surf, foam and fragments of the debris rising in the air with a terrific roar.'[79]

[79] Griffiths, G.: *History of Teignmouth*, Ex Libris Press, Bradford on Avon, 1973, pp. 95-6.



Teignmouth

But the weather was good for Sugar Face's arrival and he tells us that they '*put up at the Royal Hotel, took a turn of about half an hour upon the Den as they call the esplanade, and then sat down to dinner.'* Fanny Burney, the diarist, stayed in Teignmouth in 1773 and tells us that, at that time, there were donkey races and even a pig race on the Den as well as cricket and wrestling![80]

Sugar Face continues: *A few minutes after we had done dinner, we saw one boat and then another boat put out to sea and a great many people running down to the beach. Upon this I pulled on my great coat and hat and went down also, to get at the news. Found that a pilot boat with two pilots on board had stuck across the moveable bar of sand at the mouth of the Teign and the boats had sallied forth to bring the pilots to land. We could see the boat struggling hard for liberty but ever and anon a wave would break clean over her. There was a fresh breeze blowing and it was my opinion that if the four boats that put off did not help her she must go to pieces. The tide was coming in very fast and I could see she was filling with water and the boats appeared to be able to do nothing for her. It was getting dark so we went indoors – the last I saw of her were only her mast and rigging out of water and two boats hovering round. I wonder what there will be of her in the morning – but I must be going to bed. It's blowing pretty briskly – I have but faint hopes of her. Wait till morning.*

The first lifeboat was provided the following year, in fact.[81] Such drama and disaster was, of course, a special delight for Gastric Juice – but first he must have a little ramble on the subject of name derivations:

Walked on the Den – the name they give the esplanade. Couldn't make this out until after mature consideration: they're a set of thieves at Teignmouth, as I found out in my hotel charges, so as thieves always have a den, they call this the Den, don't you see! Consider this very penetrating on my part and quite equal to another antiquarian puzzlepate feat I once heard of – that was the derivation of "Cucumber" from "King Jeremiah". You give it up of course. Well then: "Jeremiah King" – "Jerry King" – "Jerking" – "Gerkin" – "Cucumber". This is thought a very fine specimen of orthoepy.

When it came to the evening's drama, however, it seems that it was not sufficiently disastrous to interest him much at all – in fact, was he so bored by it all that he actually fell asleep?! –

Breeze blew. Tide coming in. Holloa! Whats that? – Boat aground as I'm alive. Now I shall see a wreck! Only a boat though – that's the worst of it. Can't be many lives lost or much property destroyed. No excitement hardly. Read of a great many wrecks. Wanted to see one – safe on shore mind you – then I wouldn't care. Fancy a 120-gun ship. Wrecking! Splendid sight! Good as a play! See the bodies washed on shore. See something floating in the water – long tresses – pale face – charming girl! Screw up my courage. Wait till she's thrown up within a yard of me. Then, bravely plunging into the foaming surf, which roars

[80] Griffiths, G.: *op.cit*, p.57.
[81] Ibid, p.101.

with terrific violence and positively comes up to my ankle, I drag the lovely creature forth – rush with her in my arms to the hotel, followed by the deafening cheers of half a dozen boys, and, calling "Boots", "Waiter","Chambermaid", at the top of my voice, I place my sacred burden on a bed, roar for doctor and hot blankets and almost go mad with excitement.

Doctor comes, looks earnestly for a moment on the form before him and then bursts into a yell of laughter, at the same time holding his nose. Furious with rage, I ask him the meaning of his ill-timed mirth, upon which, in the presence of all the domestics, even to Boots, he says: "Why, that's the poor mad girl that flung herself off the cliff ten days ago, and I should advise you to change the sheets before you sleep in that bed again – bless me, this gale has brought the body to the surface – dear me!" Horrors! Horrors! Horrors! However shall I get through the ridicule! – and the coroner's inquest too! And those six boys laughing! Curse every mother's son of evil! I'll be off at once. Here, Waiter! My bill – my bill! – d'ye hear, my bill!! Bring me a coach at once – as quick as lightening. Here I am! Fast as you can, coachman! Curse those boys! If they've not got the whole town at their back! Stamped with rage on the bottom of the coach! Which awoke me!!!!!

Friday October 31 1851

Gastric Juice was feeling disinclined to comment on most aspects of this day, so we can let Sugar Face hold the platform:

I went down to the beach immediately after breakfast and, on enquiry of a couple of boys, I learnt that the boat had been towed safely in last night. I was not quite satisfied with their answers so I enquired of a man working among some timber. He gave me a very different version of its fate. By his account, nothing had been seen of it and no doubt it had gone to pieces during the night. An accumulation of sand has formed at the entrance of the Teign and has become dangerous, in the extreme, to vessels passing in and out of what is called the harbour and rendered doubly dangerous as the deposit is constantly moving. The disaster of last night proves this – even for a little boat with two pilots on board.

Starting by the 12 o'clock train, we arrived at Star Cross in twenty minutes, passing the little town of Dawlish, the railway running all along the coast. The cliffs were of all shapes and sizes, hollowed out, rounded and jagged by the sea, conveying all sorts of resemblances to castles, gates, arches and doors besides many grotesque forms. One of these, the Parson and Clerk rock, is so termed on account of a fancied resemblance it is said to bear to these ecclesiastical functionaries in the performance of their duty.

Grace Griffiths, in her history of Teignmouth, gives us one of several stories about the background:

"The Vicar of Dawlish (he was also the Vicar of East Teignmouth) and his clerk were returning home after collecting tithes in the parish of St Michael. It was a wild, wet night and the two men were miserable. When they came across a brightly lit house from which sounds of merriment issued they decided to knock on the door and ask for shelter.

"I could do with a little warmth, couldn't you?" said the priest to his companion.

Their knocking was answered by a reveller who begged them to enter and who pressed wine upon them.

The house seemed strange. For one thing, although they knew the route well they had never seen a building in that position before; also it had a musty smell. The great hall, although well lit, had some dark corners. The drapes looked like seaweed and seemed to be damp. However the two men drank deep and soon the priest was telling stories which amazed his clerk who did not think that parsons knew about such things.

Eventually they rose to go, but were so inebriated that it was difficult to mount their horses. Their sense of direction was impaired. After a few steps they found themselves in the sea. The clerk turned back and tried to cling to the cliffs, but his horse was swept from under him by the swirling waves. He heard his master repenting of his sins, commending himself to God. The clerk tried to pray. The next day the people of Teignmouth were amazed to see that the night's storm had given them two new rocks. There they stand to this day – the Parson and the Clerk."[82]

Sugar Face continues:

[82] Griffiths, G.: *op.cit*., p.140.

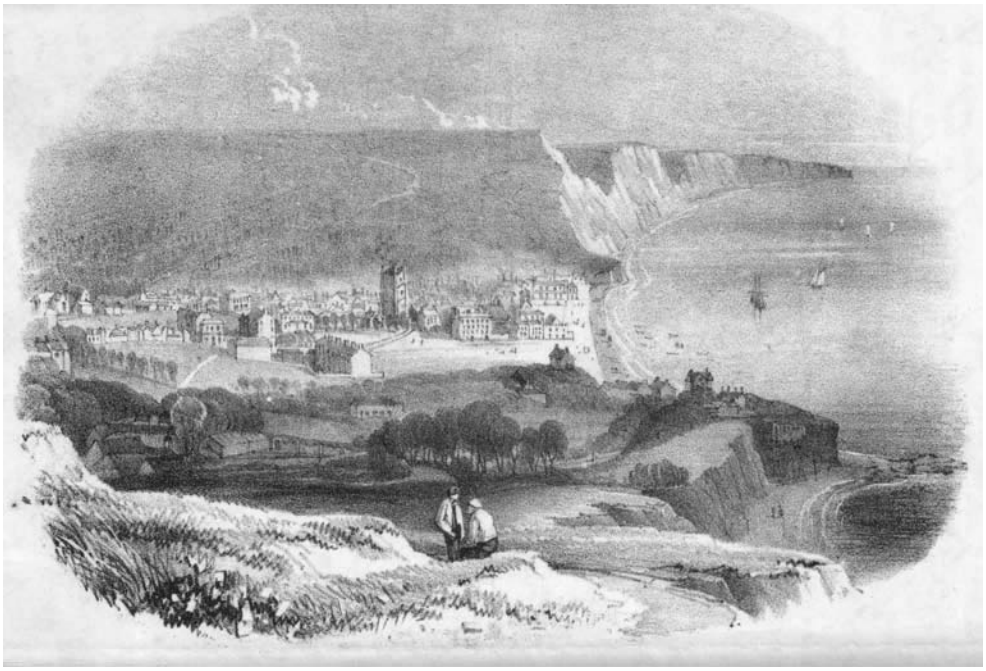
We then crossed the Ex in one of the boats that ply between Exmouth and this place in company with two other passengers. The river or estuary is two miles and half broad at this point and presents a grand appearance. On landing, we proceeded to Bastins Hotel on the Beacon, a distance of at least half a mile from the beach.

On the ridge of this hill an old fashioned row of houses stands, one of which (about the centre) forms the hotel. From here we had one of the most splendid views of our journey. A reference to the map will show the extent of land, coast, river and sea that lay stretched before us in the light of a brilliant sun. To our right, over the intermediate river, studded with all kind of craft, lay Topsham with its white houses glistening in the sun, only four miles from Exeter. A little to the left, on the other side of the river, rose Powderham Castle, a square white looking object on the summit of a hill. Immediately opposite was Star Cross and its landing pier; from this point lay the whole extent of the coast as far as Torbay, while to the left was the English Channel, a calm expanse of water as far as the eye could reach. Mrs Stock the traveller affirms that this view is only surpassed by that of Geneva[83].

After lunch and a walk in the public gardens immediately in front of the hotel, we ascended the coach for Budleigh Salterton, a small town about five miles off. Our road lay the whole distance on a rather low ground so that we could get no view at all. The Mail did not proceed further than this place, so we had to procure a chaise[84] *to transport us to Sidmouth which was about seven miles off.*

We passed through the village of Otterton whose church was rather a pretty object; otherwise our journey presented little of interest until we attained the summit of Peak Hill, and then the face of Nature appeared perfectly changed, so great and unexpected was the transition from our uninteresting drive in the lanes to our present commanding altitude.

The scene was considerably more extensive than that from Exmouth in as much as we now had Dartmouth for the background and Exeter in the distance, besides all the intervening ground between us and Exmouth. This we saw looking back, but bending our gaze forwards we beheld Sidmouth in the valley and Salcombe Hill beyond, with a long range of coast and cliff stretching far into the horizon, while to our right the sea shone in the beams of the setting sun. This view and the last (which of course forms a great part of it) were really delightful and amply repaid our trouble in coming to see them.



Sidmouth

[83] He must mean Marianna Starke, authoress of *Travels in Europe for the use of Travellers on the Continent, and likewise in the Island of Sicily*, 1828.

[84] A chaise was a light-weight carriage, with two or four wheels and an adjustable hood.

We put up at the Royal York Hotel and spent the rest of the light in parading the beach, gazing on the tranquil sea and watching the brilliancy that, for a short time, illumined the western sky until the shades of evening warned us to depart.

Now known as the Royal York & Faulkner Hotel, their place of stay is described on its website as 'A magnificent Regency building, enjoying an unrivalled position on Sidmouth's elegant Esplanade. Dating from 1810.'[85] Gastric Juice has one little story to add to this account of the trip by chaise to Sidmouth:

At Otterton, I noticed a number of pigs walking about like the gentlemanly dandies down Regent Street. There seemed to be more pigs than people in the place. I thought I recognised among them "Mrs Sow" ("Mrs Howe") and several of the juvenile "Porkeys" besides young "Trotters", whom all joined in considering such a bore, he's so eaten up by vulgarity, and young "Bacon" that everyone says will be hung although he bristles up at the slightest intimation of such a fate and expresses his disbelief by exclaiming "Gammon"![86] These appeared to me to be the real owners of the soil and the principal inhabitants of Otterton, To be sure, there was a donkey or two and a cow or so, but the pigs evidently preponderated and the place instead of being called Otterton should be named Hogston.

There seems a possibility that the Mrs Sow/Mrs Howe to whom he is referring was Julia Ward Howe who would be likely to have come to the notice of his family, as co-editor with her husband of the anti-slavery paper, *The Commonwealth*, and who, though an American, had been living in England in 1844. At that date, the Medley family had been back from Jamaica for three years, but George Webb Medley's grandmother in Jamaica was still registered as holding about 1200 acres there.

After dinner at the Royal York in Sidmouth, Gastric Juice adds:

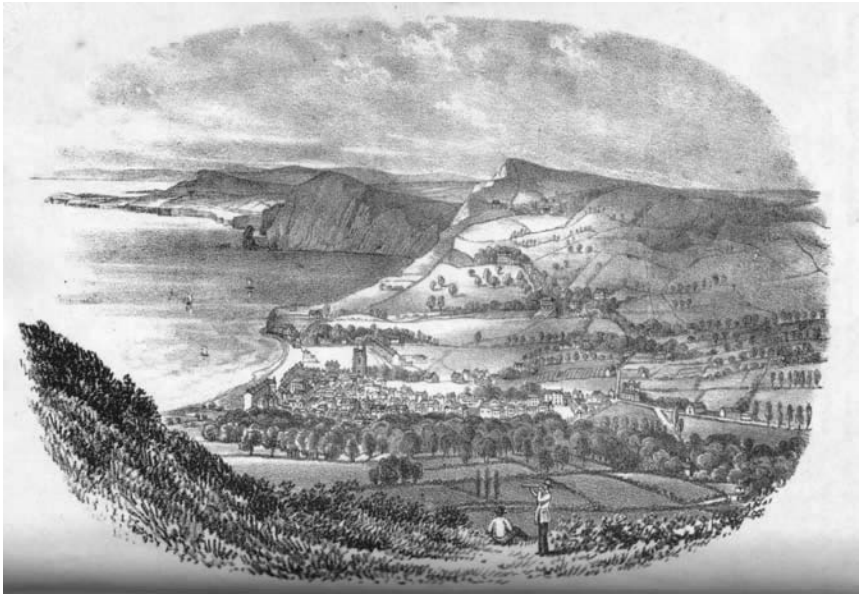
How those jolly farmers of Sidmouth do keep it up. It's half past ten and they're just gone! Waiter says they've been holding a Court Leet and have dined together, the landlord giving them a dinner once a year which happened to be today. They've kicked up a pretty row with their songs, their toasts and their thumping, bumping and cheering.

Courts Leet were mediaeval English criminal courts for trying small offences. They survived in ceremonial form, at least, into the mid-nineteenth century. According to Lewis, S. (ed.): *A topographical dictionary of England*, 1848, at Sidmouth 'Petty-sessions are held on the first Monday in every month; and at a court leet and baron held annually by the lord of the manor, two constables and tything-men are appointed.' [87]

[85] www.royalyorkhotel.net 14.4.07.
[86] i.e deceitful nonsense; bosh ! http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/gammon 14.5.07.
[87] www.british-history.ac.uk 14.4.07.

Chapter 5

In which Mr Gastric Juice is put in fear for his life
by a boatman with a wooden leg,
Miss Amelia retires hurt with the Nettle Rash
and our friends experience a Mail Coach ride
from Dorchester to Southampton.



Sidmouth

Saturday Nov 1st

Here is Sugar Face in Sidmouth:

There being no regular conveyance between Sidmouth and Lyme, we determined to proceed by water, so we engaged a lugger[88] and two men to take us to Lyme. Starting at half past nine, we arrived at about 12 o'clock, thus occupying two hours and half in travelling fifteen miles. The weather proved as favourable upon this occasion as it has done upon the preceding part of our journey. We had wind and tide with us all the way. The coast between these two places possesses but few objects of interest for the eye. It is for the most part composed of chalk and grey and red sandstone rising every now and then into cliffs 300 or 400 feet high.

About half way, we passed Seaton, a little watering place of one street built in a valley reclaimed from the sea. We thought it very pretty with its bright houses reflecting the rays of the sun. Near Seaton is a remarkable landslip, the catastrophe of which took place in 1839 on Christmas Eve when 40 acres and upwards with fields, orchard, garden and house moved gracefully half way into the sea, leaving a frightful chasm between them and the now separated mainland. We saw the house, standing apparently but little out of the perpendicular. We could not ascertain whether anybody was living therein or not.

The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould gives us a nice account of the landslip[89]:

'Previous symptoms of the approaching convulsion were not altogether wanting. Cracks had been observed for more than a week opening along the brow of the Downs, but they were not sufficiently remarkable to attract much attention, as such fissures are by no means uncommon on this bit of coast. However, about midnight of December 24th, the labourers of Mr. Chappel, the farmer who occupied Dowlands (about a quarter of a mile inland from the brow of the cliff, and over half a mile from the nearest points of the approaching convulsion) were returning from a supper given them by their employer, whereat the ashen faggot had been burnt according to custom, and were making their way to their cottages, situated near the cliff. Then they noticed that a crack which crossed their path, and which they had observed on their way to the Christmas

[88] A type of small sailing boat.

[89] Baring-Gould, S.: *op. cit*., pp.60-67.

Eve supper, had widened, and that the land beyond had sunk slightly. Nevertheless they did not consider the matter of great importance, and they went to their homes and to bed. About four o'clock in the morning they were roused by their houses reeling, by the concrete floors bursting and gaping, and the walls being rent. They started from their beds in great alarm, and about six o'clock arrived at the farm to rouse their master; they had found their escape nearly cut off, as the crack had widened and the land on the sea side had sunk considerably, so that they had, with their wives and children, to scramble up – and that with difficulty – and, in the darkness, with no little danger.

Happily all escaped in time. During Christmas Day there was no great change; parties of the coastguard were stationed on the Downs throughout the ensuing night to watch what would happen. About midnight a great fissure began to form which ran in almost a direct line for three-quarters of a mile. This fissure rapidly widened to 300 feet, descending, as it seemed at first, into the very bowels of the earth, but as the sides fell in it finally was choked at a depth of 150 feet.

One James Robertson and a companion were at that hour crossing the fields which then extended over this tract, and stumbled across a slight ridge of gravel, which at first they thought must have been made by some boys, but one of them stepping on to it, down sank his leg, and his companion had to pull him out of a yawning chasm. Next moment they saw that the whole surface of turf was starred and splitting in all directions, and they fled for their lives. The sound of the rending of the rocks they described as being much like that of the tearing of cloth or flannel. Two other members of the coastguard, who were stationed on the beach, now saw something begin to rise out of the sea like the back of a gigantic whale; at the same time the shore of shingles on which they stood lifted and fell, like the heaving of a breast in sleep. The water was thrown into violent agitation, foaming and spouting, and great volumes of mud rushed up from below. The great back rose higher and ever higher, and extended further till at last it formed a huge reef at a little distance from the beach. This ridge was composed of the more solid matter, chert and other pebbles, that had been in the sand under the chalk, and which by the sinking of the chalk was squeezed out like so much dough. It remained as a reef for some years, but has now totally disappeared, having been carried away by the waves.

As the great chasm was formed, the masses from the sides falling in were, as it were, mumbled and chewed up in the depths, and to the eyes of the frightened spectators sent forth flashes of light; they also supposed that an intolerable stench was emitted from the abyss. But this was no more than the odours given out by the violent attrition of the cherty sandstone and chalk grinding against each other as they descended. Throughout the 26th the subsided masses of the great chasm continued sinking, and the elevated reef gradually rising; but by the evening of that day everything had settled very nearly into the position in which it remains at present, although edges have since lost their sharpness and minor rents have been choked.'

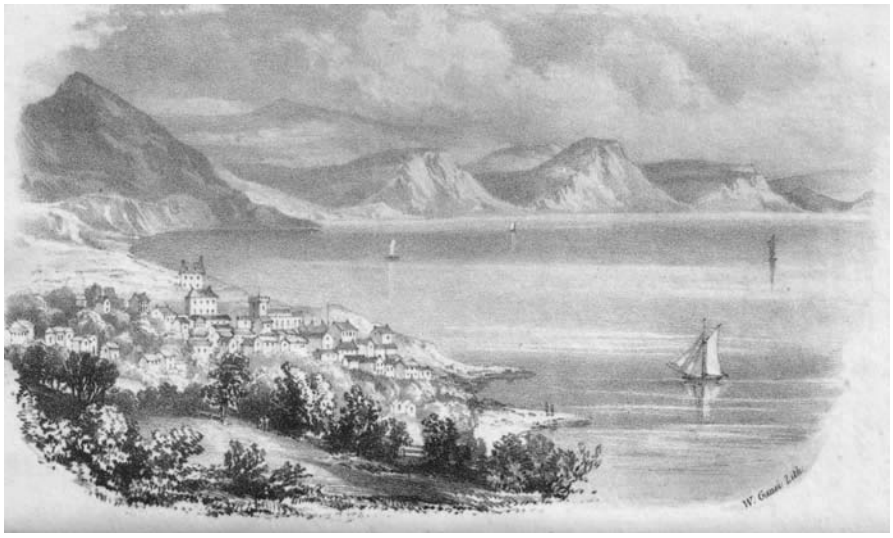
We rejoin Sugar Face in the lugger, between Sidmouth and Lyme Regis:

Just as we had passed the landslip, one of those little squalls which are called "land puffs" overtook us but our boatmen, well used to such casualties, had provided against it so that when it came it found us under bare poles. Minnie and I availed ourselves of the shelter of a good oiled skin tar jacket or we should have been wet through by the shower that accompanied the "land puff". These, if not attended to and provided against, are very dangerous and would capsize a boat under sail in a twinkling. From a bright and glowing sky, all light and cheerfulness, the heavens suddenly become overcast with a driving cloud, sweeping from the land, and the greatest despatch is often necessary in taking in the sail to avoid the pushing wind. Minnie and I had had certain qualms which are vulgarly known as feeling sick, but the excitement of the few minutes while our little vessel scudded before the breeze, and the shower pelted on our heads, quite drove them away.

We kept very close and, although we did not see them, we could fancy the height and breaking of the waves as we felt moved up and down in our swift career. It soon passed and then all was bright again, but it left the atmosphere very chilly and our seamen looked anything but comfortable after it, especially our old helmsman who had to weather the squall as he was. As for his young mate, he got under a thick jacket with his wooden leg.

It was with a feeling of great satisfaction that, on looking round once more, we perceived the storm moving from us like a great curtain borne up the Channel. We were now close to Lyme. Our men took to their oars and I took the helm and in about twenty minutes we were landed for the first time in Dorsetshire.

The town was anything but prepossessing as we entered it, our luggage carried by one of the men, and we all toiling off the beach up a hill into the place. We could find no landing place and so had to run the boat ashore. We took up our quarters at the Cups Hotel[90] and there had our beefsteak.



Lyme from Holme Bush

As, by now, the reader will anticipate, Gastric Juice's experience of this little adventure was somewhat more traumatic:

Well we're in for it today! Fifteen miles of sea in the open boat – won't we be sick ? Ugh! Got into a train of thought, as I couldn't get into any other train – what a set of savages they must be down in these parts – not even a bus between here and Lyme. Got into the boat. Tried to look nautical. Told one of the men I had crossed the Atlantic twice[91], to which he only said: "Indeed, Sir." Brute! Ought to have been wonder struck at least.

Look at that other fellow with his wooden leg, too! Call him a sailor? Why he'll stamp a hole through the bottom of the boat, that he will! I shall be in terror the whole voyage from that! There's always something to worry one, no matter where you are and what you're after, and now, because there's nothing else in all nature to trouble us, that fellow must have a wooden leg of all things in the world, in a boat. That's what I call a 'thorn in the flesh'. Poor fellow! He's got most to complain of, after all.

Asked him yesterday how he lost it.
"Man of War", answered he.
"Shot off?" said I.
"Tumbled off the rigging", said he.
"There'd be some glory now, if it had been shot off", said I.
"I don't know, Sir", said he, "I get a shilling a day for't."
"Bravo", said I. "Is that little fellow a boy of yours?" "Yes sir."
"When did you go to sea?" asked I. "As soon as I could run away Sir."
"Ah!" said I, " and I suppose you'll bring him up to the sea, won't you?"
"Oh no, Sir!" said he.
"Ah!" said I, "perhaps he'll run away too."

This was a puzzler evidently, an 'argumentum ad hominem'[92] that he couldn't get over and so the poor fellow could only look his perplexity. Went away pleased with my dexterity and cleverness. Perhaps I've

[90] Some years previously, the Three Cups hotel had a reputation for innovation, having introduced five bathing machines on the beach, towed into the water by donkeys. Those within were riskily naked but were attended by local ladies, fully clothed. http://www.lymeregis.com/history/jane_austen_richard_fox.htm 14.5.07.

[91] True enough: once at the age of about 3, on his way to Jamaica with his father, and once at the age of about 14 on the way back to England.

[92] i.e. an argument in the form of an attack on or personal challenge to whoever one is arguing with, rather than any attempt to address the substance of the argument. So, for once, George has used a Latin tag incorrectly !

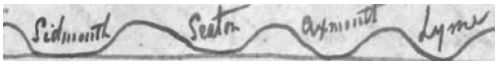
'planted a thorn in that bosom'[93]*, who knows? The thought of the possibility of that child running away may embitter the life of that man, who knows?*

We put out a little way from land. Sat up very stiff. Lurch! – Umph! Asked Amelia how she felt. "Horrid", said she. Lurch! – Ugh! Looked at Amelia; Amelia looked at me – couldn't speak! Gave a ghastly smile at her; she did likewise, at me. Ugh! And those brutes! Wouldn't mind being sick if it weren't for them – how they would grin! What a fool to go and tell that fellow I'd crossed the Atlantic. What will he think of me now? Breeze freshens – lurch! – Ugh! – lurch – Ugh! Want to be sick – not able – Ugh! Looked at Amelia – green and white and then ashy! – Horrid. Wondered how I looked. Asked her afterwards. "Green", she said. Green enough, thought I, to go in this cursed boat – Ugh! Felt so miserable. Didn't care a straw about any mortal thing in existence. Looked at each other again. This time we didn't smile. Mouth in just the contrary direction. Oh! Oh! – If ever I get into a boat again – drown me, that's all.

Wooden leg now gave me a tan jacket and told me to look out for squalls. Looked despairingly at him – didn't know what he meant – found out very soon! Man at the helm roared out: "Down wi'un! Quick!" Timber-toe evidently agitated – stumped about ferociously – looked as if he was trying to dig a hole through the bottom of the boat, caught hold of the rope, tugged like mad, caught hold of the sail.

Halloa! Whats that? Whirr! Whirr!! Flap!, Flap!, Wish-wash! Down comes the rain! Found out the use of the tan jacket in half a minute. Boat half twirled round! Old fellow tugging hard at the helm, roaring out to Timber-toe to "Down wi'un". Timber-toe had hold of the sail, was trying to unhook it, had one arm round the mast, the other hand catching hold of the sail. What a sight he was! Pirouetting on that leg of his! Sail fixed at the bottom – made a desperate effort and got it off the hook. Just in time – Whew!! How it blew! Got frightened. Cursed the sickness. Stronger devil drove out the weaker. What they call 'running before the wind.' Don't admire it – rather go behind it. Thank goodness it's all over!

Looked up – awfully cold – nose like ice – could have chipped the end off. Old fellow looked like a drowned rat. Timber-toe rather better off – sheltered himself I suppose. Looked at Amelia; she looked at me. Frightened? – Frightened! "Who was frightened – I wasn't!", I'm sure we both said. Now that it was all over, who was frightened I should like to know. Cold – very cold! Those two fellows got the best of it. They rowed, and got warm. I had to steer and remain cold. Got to Lyme Regis at last – so glad! Thumped on the beach, we did. What a savage place, thought I to myself – no landing pier. As for the sea coast! –

It was like this all, the way: 

Lyme from Charmouth Fields

[93] A deliberate misquotation from Shakespeare: *Hamlet.*

What a hole that Lyme is – call it a watering place? Wouldn't live there if I were paid for it. Hate country towns – so deadly lively – so flat – so stale and unprofitable – so slow. There's nothing like London. Brighton has possibilities perhaps – but that's only a marine suburb of London. Put Piccadilly on the Strand and there's Brighton for you. What are you laughing at?? Think I was joking? – Sir, "I never joke", as Sam Johnson[94] would say. But I'm not Sam Johnson and so I don't say it.

Unfortunately, Sugar Face's plans are about to be thrown into confusion:

At this juncture my sister communicated to me that her travels must thenceforward be homeward, as the disorder commonly known as Nettle Rash[95] was annoying her to such a degree that it was absolutely necessary that she should return. To this of course I had nothing to do but to acquiesce, as it might prove dangerous if unattended to and exposed to cold, so that I immediately determined to push on to Southampton as soon as possible, from which place she could get to London directly.

Gastric Juice is, of course, a good deal less sympathetic:

There's that horrid girl – gone and got the nettle rash! Scratching for her life. Thought she's been crabby the last day or two – couldn't make it out. She always had an itching palm quarrel between Brutus and Cash us[96] every day of my life, she declaring that I act the part of Brutus to the life. Never mind – she will have her joke. Well, she must be packed off I suppose – she wont be able to take care of herself, so I think I'll put her up in a parcel, ticketed and labelled 'with care this side up'.

They passed the afternoon in the town where Sugar Face found '*the church which was rather pretty'* and then '*sauntered back on to the Cobb, as the circular stonework which forms the harbour is called';* whilst Gastric Juice *'bought physic for Amelia'* and '*walked up a dirty hill with houses on both sides which they call the High Street'.* Sugar Face '*stood for half an hour at the extremity, watching the water breaking over the sunken rocks and the sea birds chasing one another in rapid flight as they uttered their plaintive cries'.*

Then, says Sugar Face:

At five o'clock we got into the omnibus for Charmouth, through which place the Mail passes in its way to Dorchester. At 6 pm the Mail drove up to the inn door at Charmouth. I put Minnie inside to keep her out of the cold but got up, outside, myself.

Gastric Juice is more informative and, of course, not complimentary about the conveyances:

We got into a sort of fly that they called the omnibus. Poor creatures! Wonder whether they'd ever seen a real omnibus! And such a horse! No respectable knacker would have bought him. And such a hill to climb! Poor brute! One mile up to the top and steep almost as the side of a house. Nearly one hour going the two miles to Charmouth where the Mail passed. Mail rattled in at 6. Coachman in black suit and moustaches. Rather odd, thought I. And there seemed another sort of a coachman bustling about looking more like a coachman. There was a lady inside and I packed up Amelia inside to keep her company. There were two frumps on the seat behind the coachman. Got up on the box seat.

And so they set off for Dorchester and Sugar Face enjoys the journey and waxes eloquent about it:

The weather had cleared up and there was not a cloud in the sky and, although it was not cold, the moon and stars shone with no warmth and I was glad to button up close. I put my wrapper well round my legs and my shawl comfortably round my neck.

Thus equipped. I was fully prepared to enjoy the 22 miles ride before us and I did enjoy it. There is a peculiar charm in travelling thus at night, a sort of feeling of completeness, as you feel that compact coach beneath you and the gallant steeds before you. And I believe this charm was heightened upon this occasion,

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[94] Samuel Johnson, 1709-84, author, biographer and critic, who developed an extensive English dictionary (1755). Not known, however, for the statement 'I never joke' !

[95] Otherwise known as hives or urticaria, it is 'characterised by a lumpy, itchy rash with red spots. It is the rash you get when you have been stung by nettles. However, it can also be caused by a reaction to certain foods and, occasionally, by a viral infection.' (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk 15.4.07.)

[96] i.e. Brutus and Cassius, as in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar,* though their argument was not of a financial nature, which is the implication of 'itching palm'.

at least I felt it so. There were many things to render my journey interesting and to give it a touch of romance. We had but few passengers and, of these, only one travelled with us all the way and he drove the coach.

I learnt that he was Mr Cook, the equestrian and proprietor of several hippodromes in the country. This gentleman drives 16-in-hand, so that his present performance was easy to him. The coachman sat immediately behind him while I occupied the box seat. Pleasant and easy chat enlivened many miles' travel, chat of the most appropos kind – coaches, horses, the road, the opposition and the ups and downs of a coachman's life formed the topic of our retired Jehu, while Mr Cook enlightened us with an account of his troupes and his horses and his feats. But what had I to tell? What could I talk about that could interest them as they had interested me? Alas nothing! So that in the intervals of conversation I was left to my own reflections.

It was delicious to gaze upon the heaven above, the moon shining with a radiance pale and wan while the stars twinkled as if struggling to break through that gauzy mistiness that always exists after rain, and then, turning to my right, to behold the sea in perfect repose, as gentle as a giant when he sleeps, and bearing on its bosom a broad and smooth track of light that seemed to lead to the mansions of the blessed. And then 'twas music to listen to the wheels and the horses feet, as in quick and rapid step those noble animals cantered over the heath. Now they enter a hollow and, as the coach turns round the corner, we come upon one of those scenes which Rembrandt delighted to picture – a blacksmith's forge. 'Twas strikingly beautiful and conjured up many associations.

A little further on, a brilliant light is seen flaming from the mountain top – formerly the signal for rapine and violence, it now betokened but the peaceful encampment of some gypsy tribe passing round the hill. We suddenly lose sight of it and enter upon a wild looking country as dreary as the prairie and suggestive of those times when Claude Duval and such gallant knights collected the toll from the traveller. But those times have passed and I could lose myself in reverie without fear of their interruption. I thought of the distant scenes of occupation and abode that I was wont to live in and I thought of those who were wont to fill them and I wondered what they were doing at the moment. But it is useless to enlarge upon such topics. They would, if written down, fill a volume. Suffice it to say, I thought of all the fanciful things I could. I put everything into the kaleidoscope of the mind and, turning them about in every way, they fell naturally into shapes and forms of exquisite beauty. We changed horses once only and that was at Bridport, 10 miles from Dorchester. We arrived there about 8 o'clock, as near I can remember – lamps alight, shops open and many in the market place, it being Saturday night.

The mail-coach service had started in 1784 with a run between Bristol and London, leaving Bristol at 4 p.m. and arriving at the G.P.O. in London at 9 a.m. the next morning. 'Within twenty years … a national institution had been created. Up and down the country, the mails were regarded with admiration, pride and affection …'[97] but by the time of our friends' journey, they were dying out, supplanted by the railway, much to the regret of some who felt that 'a well-built comfortable carriage with four post-horses was the perfection of travelling', who enjoyed the hospitality of the inns on the road and who did not have to cope with 'the experiences of a crowded railway station'.[98]

It is interesting that, by 1851, the speed of the coach no longer impresses our travellers. De Quincey, a strong apologist for this mode of transport, whose favourite seat was up next to the driver, put it thus:

'Seated on the old mail-coach, we needed no evidence out of ourselves to indicate the velocity. The vital experience of the glad animal sensibilities made doubts impossible. We heard our speed, we saw it, we felt it as a thrilling; and this speed was not the product of blind insensate agencies that had no sympathy to give, but was incarnated in the fiery eyeballs of the noblest among brutes, in his dilated nostril, spasmodic muscles, and thunder-beating hoofs.'[99]

Such speed was not without its dangers, however, as the following coachman's story illustrates:

'A pole chain broke when descending a rather steep fall of ground, which caused the coach to approach the off-side of the road, and, as the lamps threw their light very high, I did not see a

[97] Mountfield, D.: *The coaching age*, Robert Hale, London, 1976, p. 66.
[98] Corbett, E.: *An old coachman's chatter*, (1891), EP Publishing, Wakefield, 1974, pp. 84-5.
[99] Ibid, p. 6, quoting De Quincey, T.: *The English Mail-Coach*, Dent (Everyman), London, 1912.

large stone, commonly called, in the parlance of the road, "a waggoner", until it was close under the roller bolt, and immediately afterwards the fore wheel struck it with such violence that the concussion threw the box passenger and myself off the box. He was thrown clear of the coach, whilst I was pitched over the wheelers' heads, but, alighting on the leaders' backs, was quietly let down to the ground between them. This, mercifully, laid me what the sailors call 'fore and aft', and consequently the coach was able to pass over without touching me, and beyond a broken arm, I was little the worse. The horses galloped on for a few hundred yards, and then ran the off-side wheels up the hedge-bank, upsetting the coach into the road.'[100]

One would hardly expect the journey to have delighted Gastric Juice and those looking forward to the ramblings of his pessimistic imagination will not be disappointed, though at least he had no accident to complain about:

I endeavoured to get into conversation with coachman in black – very taciturn and crabbed I thought him. Said I to him, "It's a fine night".

"It is", said he.

"This is the Mail isn't it?" said I.

"Yes – yes it is", he said, rather doubtingly I thought.

"What time do you get to Dorchester?" I further asked.

"About … about 9 I think."

Strange, thought I, doesn't know what time he gets in. A pretty coachman he is no doubt.

The coach was now ready to start. White coachman comes round and says to me: "That seat is engaged Sir if you please". Thereupon I turned round savagely to black coachman and said to him: "You didn't tell me it was engaged when I got up!" "No Sir, I did not." Then I got off it and went behind, by the frumps. Well, thought I – I wont give <u>you</u> a shilling for your incivility. And I got cross and dumpy and didn't believe that white fellow <u>had</u> engaged the box seat. Night rather fine – a sort of dampness, <u>not</u> cold, hanging about as it always does after rain. I put my adventure into a well known rhyme.

"Twas a beautiful night and the stars shone bright
And the moon o'er the waters played,
When a Cavalier to the top of the Mail
For a journey went undismayed.
With liveliest tread he quickly sped
Next where the Coachman sat
And round and round he very soon bound
His rug and handkerched.

He raised his eye to the Coachman high
And quietly gazed at his phiz.
With amazement he sees shake about in the breeze
Long whiskers and moustachi<u>z.</u>

Then up comes a man as hard as he can
"Who's that in my seat?" cried he.
"Be off, be off, for that box seat, Sir,
it never belonged to thee."
Now one would have thought he'd have squabbled and fought,
He was just of that quarrelsome age.
But our Cavalier he quite scorned the idea
Of putting himself in a rage.
With a good hard lug he pulled up his rug
And, as backwards he climbed, says he:
"A fellow like this behaving amiss
May go to the Devil for me, may go, may go to the D for me".

[100] Corbett. E.: *op. cit*., pp.48-9.

Passed through many lonely places – over a heath. Thought of Dick Turpin, Jerry Abershaw and all the cut throat highwaymen I could recollect. Just such a place, thought I, where a man rides up, shoots the guard, puts a pistol to your head, and says: "Your money or your life!" And then perhaps takes both. Got on like this till we got to Bridport. Then the two coachees got some brandy and water, I suppose, for they seemed more affable when they got on the box again.

Now the mystery about that black coachman was cleared up. Minnie told me, out of the coach window, that the lady inside had informed her that the man driving wasn't the <u>real</u> coachman, but the best whip in the county – Mr Cook, the driver of 16-in-hand! Saw through the brick wall that I'd been knocking against all the way and felt appeased.

Changed a passenger or two. White Coachy politely offered me the box seat now – rascal – when he saw that he was found out! And then Cook condescendingly threw off his incog., at which I pretended to be highly delighted and passed a compliment or two. Then we all got very chatty and communicative. Real Coachy told stories of the road – how he ran the opposition off – how he had a six miles race with it, side by side, out of Exeter. What he gave for the off leader – <u>such</u> a good'un to go. How many horses his guvner had – 400 off and on. And then the equestrian spun his yarn. He had 70 horses always travelling about. Told us of a strike of his men and how he served them out by setting to work at once. How his father had made him always groom his own horse and how hard he thought it and how he had found out the benefit of it since – and many other things. And then I told 'em about the Exhibition and made 'em wonder at the number of the lost articles found in the building – about 1000 handkerchiefs, 600 brooches, 2 petticoats, 2 bustles and an invalid's chair. How they did laugh at the petticoats and the bustles! And so we got on – coachman roaring out now and then to let the drunken people know he was coming – Saturday night you see: "All the Dorset labourers get drunk then", he said, and then he kept trimming up the lamps, for, said he, if he did by any chance run over one of 'em, it would be their fault. And then we got to Dorchester at last.

Sugar Face tells us that they *had to wait an hour at the King's Head, Dorchester, before the train started for Southampton, which it did at a quarter before eleven, and that was half an hour behind its time. We had the carriage (1st class,* says Gastric Juice*) all to ourselves, so we made ourselves as comfortable as we could, Minnie with her feet on the opposite seat and I upon the floor, with two cushions for a couch, a carpet bag for a pillow and my wrapper for a blanket. Upon our arrival at Southampton, twenty minutes past one, Sunday morning, we walked over to one of the hotels immediately opposite the station and got to bed with all despatch.*

According to Gastric Juice, they stayed at Solomon's Hotel, one of two opposite the station (the other being Radley's). In his view: *Solomon's isn't the nicest place in the world but they seem very respectable people and are much frequented by passengers going out by the various steam ships that sail from here.*

Sunday Nov 2d 1851

Sugar Face is suitably sad to say goodbye to Amelia:

Today I parted with my dear fellow traveller. It was with a feeling of sorrow or <u>desolation</u> that I saw her borne away from me at Winchester, to which place I accompanied her on her homeward journey – I felt left alone and deserted by her, but when I recollected that her departure was imperative I was to a great extent reconciled.

Gastric Juice, on the other hand, is as ungracious about it as his character demands ! –

Had to pack the girl off this morning. When the train got to Winchester we took leave of one another – pretended to be very affectionate and sorry she was going. So did she. Couple of hypocrites. Glad to get rid of her – I've been lugging her about with me for 10 days and what have I got for it? – a <u>double</u> hotel bill, that's the long and the short of the matter. Now I was to be free. Now I could go into the coffee rooms at the hotels and have some sort of company and conversation. What had we to talk of, to each other, I should like to know? – bad as man and wife, positively. And wasn't she glad to leave me too? What did she care about me? I've a notion – an idea – a fancy that that nettle rash was all put on, all shammed, to get away from me. Told her so – she denied it of course.

Chapter 6

In which Mr Sugar Face and Mr Gastric Juice experience the disgusting sport of badger baiting and Mr Gastric Juice is the more disgusted.

Sunday Nov 2nd

Having seen off his poor sister, Sugar Face goes into Winchester to explore the city:

Her going home will make a considerable alteration in my plans – so thought I, as I wended my way into the ancient city of Winchester from the railway station.

*Passing through the streets and under an ancient gateway, which I suppose did once form part of the walls, I came upon a curious old cross and noticed a row of about a dozen houses to be somewhat similar in construction to those of Chester, I mean the Rows. (*Gastric Juice has little to say of the city except that it *looked a musty old place.)*

Turning to the right, I came upon the glorious old cathedral. I entered, and was greatly struck with the magnificent architecture. It was the grandest cathedral I had ever entered and I was proportionately moved. (Gastric Juice, most uncharacteristically: *Oh! What a treat – sublime – solemn – delicious, glorious place – and so vast.*)

The Communion Service was being performed and I was in time to hear the responses chanted, besides the Gloria, before the Gospel and the Nicene Creed.

In strains of rich and solemn harmony the notes swelled forth, filling the vast edifice with a volume of sound conveying to the mind the deepest impressions and kindling in the heart the liveliest emotions.

Even Gastric Juice is impressed: *the responses of the choristers and the congregation seemed as though wafted on angels' wings – so sweet, so affecting! Now they sing the Nicene Creed – exquisite! Wonder what the choristers themselves thought of it. So accustomed to it, I suppose it produced no effect upon 'em – not so upon me. It was entrancing. Wish it had lasted an hour. The Communion Service over, I was admitted into the choir and was delighted with its exquisite beauty. It was one of the greatest treats I ever had. I should like to spend a day looking over its various interesting details. In my humble opinion (which is worth nothing to anyone but myself) it surpasses every one that I have seen.*

After service I strolled up a hill in the vicinity and had a capital view of the city. There was nothing striking or picturesque in the whole view and I did not remain very long looking about, but walked back through the streets to the railway station. The train was advertised to start at 12.40 and I got to the platform 12.10, half an hour too soon. There, a young man got into conversation with me and, learning I was a stranger, he offered to take me to the barracks, 5 minutes walk thence. He stated that they were well worth seeing, the structure having been raised as a palace for Charles II.

Having so much time to spare, I gladly acquiesced, and we then walked there, looked at the building, which reminded me of Hampton Court Palace, and walked into the canteen. The soldiers are not allowed to drink spirits, so that malt liquors alone are vended in these curious beer shops. My companion insisted upon my having a glass of something, so we called for porter. Gastric Juice is a little more forthcoming as regards descriptive detail: *Sanded floor – bloated woman – deal tables – soldiers with jackets off, drinking beer – pretty clean. Had two glasses of porter – he <u>would</u> pay – let him.*

We then got back to the station where I thanked him for his attentions and got into the carriage for Southampton. He was certainly a civil young fellow and made me many offers of escort over Winchester, Portsmouth, &c., which I was compelled to decline.

After dinner at Southampton, I sallied out for a ramble, bending my steps towards the docks. I was greatly struck with the splendid fleet of first class ocean steamers lying alongside each other. I counted 8 of them, besides smaller steam vessels which would have been large anywhere but by the side of these monsters of the deep. The Thames and the Indus start tomorrow for the West and East Indies respectively.

I then walked along for about half a mile to the pier, which juts out into the Solent. I could get no further than this, so I turned sharp to the right, down some narrow streets, and came into a large wide street called High Street – I suppose. It is crossed by an old archway. The lamps were being lighted, so after a walk of half a mile, going out of the town, I returned to the hotel, had tea, wrote my journal and went to bed with many anxious thoughts about that poor child – I hope she has got home safely and no harm done.

Monday Nov 3rd

Gastric Juice awakes, distracted by the hiatus caused by Amelia:

Didn't know what in the world to do now that girl had gone away. She has turned all my plans topsy turvy by her rash conduct and I'm exceedingly nettled at it.

What a bustle the hotel is in this morning. Can hardly get my breakfast – passengers going out to the East and West Indies, all busy as bees. Two gentlemen in the Coffee Room were in earnest conversation about Jamaica, to which one of them was going. Called up in my mind many reminiscences. Hadn't a good opportunity or I'd have found out who he was. Got my breakfast by dint of bawling and roaring – only by snatches though, for I lost my teapot for half an hour and sent three people after it. Then they brought me one – couldn't possibly tell whether it was the right one – dare say not – tea awfully weak.

Sugar Face, by contrast, gives us an account of Southampton docks (which Gastric Juice hardly mentions):

I spent the morning, after writing a couple of letters, in rambling over the docks and examining the vessels therein. It was a busy scene. The Bentinck was being refitted and taking in coal, occupations which took up the time of at least 100 persons, and so on all through the squadron in dock. And then the porters and the car men were in the greatest activity with their loads and their trucks, and there were men with a hundred weighing machines, and men with cranes of all sorts and sizes, pulling up and letting down loads of every calibre, and there were passengers arriving just too late to get on board the departing steamers. Some were frantic about their luggage and others were rushing about looking for their friends.

There were people coming and people going, and sailors washing canvas here, and others with baskets of coal on their heads running into the weighing sheds. Others, two and two, bearing boxes of coal, were rushing into the weighing sheds, and others, two and two, bearing boxes of coal were pushing out of the weighing sheds, and running as hard as they could with their heavy burden along a plank a foot wide over the water, 20 feet at least, into huge apertures yawning in the sides of the enormous steamers. There were dock labourers at work, and men and horses and carriages all contributing to increase the sound of this busy multitude. What a contrast to the quiet of yesterday, when everything seemed to repose as if nothing could ever disturb it.

I learnt the names of the vessels in dock yesterday: Indus, Thames, Clyde, Ripon, Bentinck and Tay. These are only the large ones. There were many smaller, of which I could not take note in the presence of such company.

The Isle of Wight is the next destination, for which Sugar Face then sets out:

I took my place in the train for Portsea, the 12.50, arriving there 1.45, and then went on board the Queen steamer plying between Portsea and Cowes. The trip was pleasant, though rather cold until we got to Ryde; then the wind freshened and chilled us all to the core. Occasionally we shipped a sea – the spray dashed clean over us, sprinkling everyone.

There were two ladies on board, apparently sisters. One of them, the younger, very pretty, and I was happy to be able to render them some service in the way of company by lending them my travelling rug. On landing at Cowes, I was very politely thanked by the younger one and received a sweet smile which repaid me a thousand times for the little courtesy it had been in my power to offer.

Oh Beauty, how great is thy power! How mighty thine influence! In thy presence the tyrant is humbled, the despot cringes, the warrior sheaths his sword, the cruel man forgives, the proud man learns humility, the rough man politeness, and when thou goest do not a thousand eyes follow thee and a thousand hearts sigh for thee? Does not a glance from thine eye or a smile from thy cheek make a man a slave to do they will? Take heed then, oh beautiful one, what thou doest. Remember that thou hast in thy hand the very heart strings of Manhood and from that noble instrument thou mayest evoke strains of harmony and love that would fill a seraph's ear or notes of agony and woe – the discord of despair!

I mustn't omit to mention that we passed several places worthy of notice – Ryde, Osborn House, Norris Castle. Had not the voyage proved so cold, I should have been able to have enjoyed the novel scene that met my eyes from the deck of the steamer. There were ships of war of all sizes at anchor; batteries bristling with cannon; yachts sailing to and fro; men of war boats pulling and rowing about; steamers plying the breeze, blowing stiffish, the sea running high and now and then breaking over us, and withal so bitterly cold that it chilled my heart's blood almost.

At length we landed and I put up at the Fountain Hotel, immediately facing the pier here. I made myself as comfortable as I could for the evening. I was only disturbed three times by strangers, so I had the commercial room all to myself. The first incomer proved to be Sir William Symonds, late Surveyor to the Navy (I believe)[101]*, the man who used to have long articles written on his shipbuilding in the Times – now they cut him up! Then two gentlemen just bobbed their heads in and went out again and the third was a gentlemanly young man who had missed the steamer from Southampton and was obliged to hire a sailing boat to get across. I wrote up my journal and then went to bed.*

So how did the day's travelling appeal to Gastric Juice? –

After walking round and round the docks, I set off for Portsea by rail, intending to get to Cowes by water from thence. A stupid plan, as I afterwards found out, for I could go to Cowes from Southampton as well as from Portsea.

I got into the carriage with a decent sort of woman. Got talking with her of course – spoke of the weather. I always open conversation that way, it's original. From that, I got to the Exhibition and she suddenly propounded a most puzzling question to me. What was going to be done with the vast surplus? I could not tell her of course, and then she gave me her idea of what should be done with it: "It should go to pay the National Debt". But I suggested to her that it could not be appropriated in that manner, as the fund was raised for a specific object.

But that was nothing in her view of the case. She had a confused idea that the National Debt was principally owing to George the Fourth's extravagance – she called it the Great Folks' Debts, which somehow or other the nation became answerable for. I was exceedingly amused with her. She didn't know what the amount of it was, at all, or anything about it, except that it was George the Fourth's and the Great Folks' Debts, and she said something about soldiers and sixpence a day which I couldn't understand. I wish I had bamboozled her a bit – didn't think of it or I would have. I should have been wonder-struck at her proposition and have advised her to write to Lord John Russell and she would soon make her fortune. This was a specimen of a She Politician and I should have liked to have shewn her to Mrs Bloomer, or some one of those who advocate the Rights of Women.

Arrived at Portsea and then crossed to Cowes. Sea rough and strong breeze. Saw some fellows get a bucket of salt water over 'em which made me laugh; presently got one myself and then I didn't laugh, and then someone had his hat blown away which was intensely amusing. Pretty girl on board – I should think about 20 to 22 – with some one, her sister I suppose from the likeness. There was a time when I should have fallen in love with her on the spot, but that time has passed. Rarely seen a prettier girl – positively struck with her. Became very polite. Sent 'em my warm rug. Seemed very grateful, which made one perfectly happy. Didn't care for the piercing cold and the dashing spray after <u>that</u> – I despised 'em.

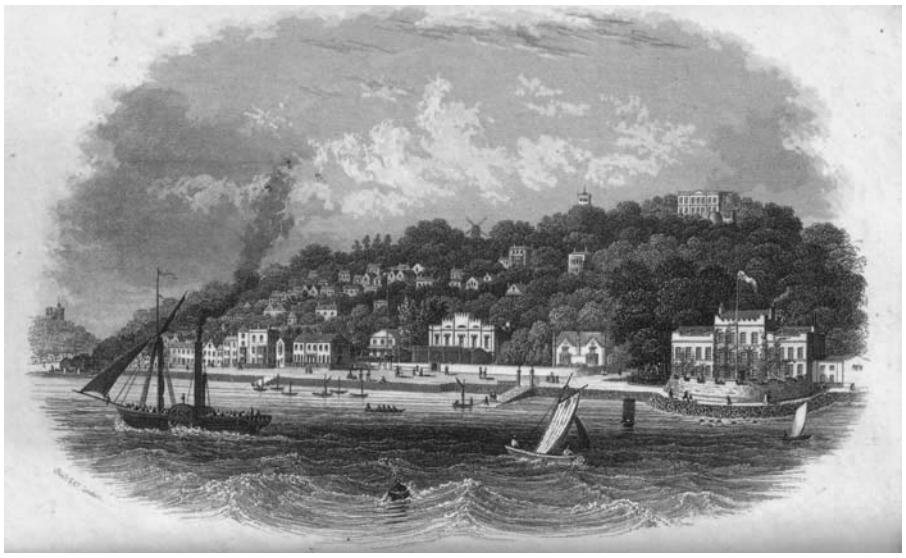
When we landed, she said, with a smile that murthered me intirely: "We are <u>very</u> much obliged to you indeed". I stammered out: "I hope it's been of some service to you", to which she replied: "Oh yes, it has

[101] Sir William Symonds (1782-1856), Surveyor to the Navy, naval architect and rear admiral.

indeed". Oh – Gastric, Gastric! I'm afraid it was all up with you then. And why did you follow her with your eyes, so, afterwards, as long as you could? Eh? Answer that, old fellow.

Tuesday Nov 4th

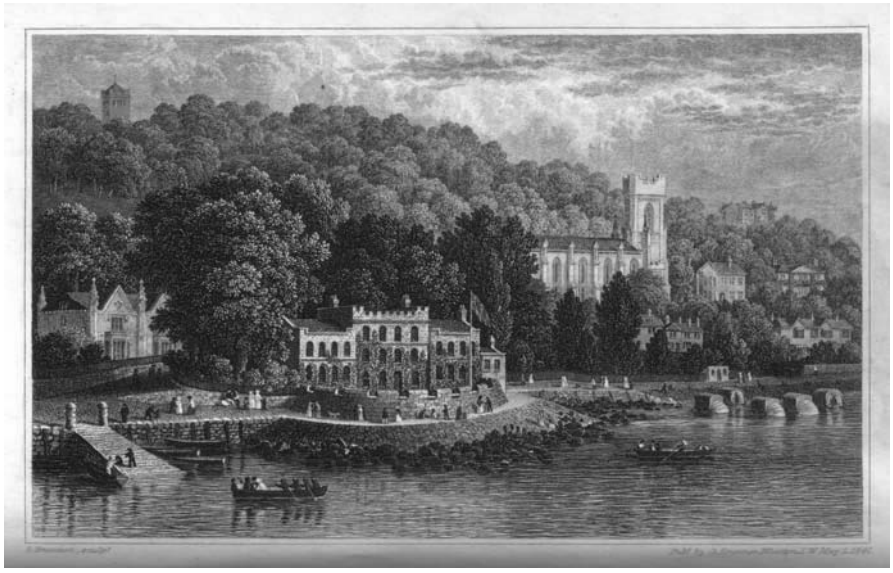
The next morning Mr Gastric Juice *having found himself recovered from his bilious attack or liver complaint cannot for the life of him find anything or anybody to quarrel with. Consequently he has nothing whatever to say and must leave the narration of his journey to his young friend Mr Sugar Face.*



West Cowes, Isle of Wight

Sugar Face explored Cowes:

Immediately after breakfast, I set out on an exploring expedition. I walked through the town, along the shore, by the castle and the club house of the Royal Yacht Club. The breeze was delicious and, although stronger than it was yesterday, it felt bracing and inspiriting. I passed many beautiful marine villas on the coast, with their trim lawns and luxuriant foliage. Nothing bore the resemblance of approaching winter. I hardly saw a fallen leaf . I suppose the trees are mostly evergreen.



The Castle, West Cowes

Extending my walk some distance along the coast, I came upon a road that went inland and looked as if it would take me to some high point or other from which I might obtain a view of the adjacent country. I

had several views as I proceeded – they were pretty but not particularly striking. I suppose I have not come to the most romantic part of the island – I must leave that to another time.

I went through some lovely secluded lanes with pretty cottages that seemed one large cluster of creeping plants and flowers, so surrounded were they by them, and shrubs of all kinds. The atmosphere in these abodes of quiet was very mild and quite a contrast to the bluff and boisterous air on the coast, but a few hundred yards away. I don't wonder at people liking to come to such retreats for a while, from the bustle and turmoil of business or office. They must feel a delightful repose as they sit in their quiet bowers, the songs of birds and the rustling of leaves being the only sounds that break the stillness of the solitude.

I returned to the town in the opposite direction to that which I had taken in setting out, coming upon the ferry between West and East Cowes. The ferry boats were tossed merrily up and down by the waves as they crossed. The water here is about the breadth of the Thames at low water at London Bridge, but I had no wish to cross so I returned to the hotel feeling very comfortable and fresh for my walk. The boat did not return to Southampton till half past three, so I passed an hour or two in having lunch and writing my journal.

At length I set off. The sea was rough, but we had the wind in our favour so we made a quick passage to Portsmouth. After dinner, I took a nap until awakened by the sound of music under my window. The hotel is situated on the Parade and at a certain hour every evening the band of the garrison enliven the citizens with gay and martial airs. I then had tea, wrote my journal and retired to rest.

Wednesday 5th Nov.

News of Amelia and an invitation awaited Sugar Face the next morning:

I anxiously wended my way to the post office before breakfast this morning and was glad to learn that dear Minnie had arrived safely and that Costin[102] *had taken pity on my forlorn condition and had invited me to Bagshot for a few days. Consequently I set off immediately for Lambourn House*[103] *and arrived there about 2 o'clock. The house was originally a small one but has been enlarged by the addition of wings etc. Mr Costin, although not 21 years of age, is the head of this establishment for enabling young men to pass their examination at Sandhurst College, a proceeding that they must go through before they can obtain their commissions in the army. This has been a regulation of the Service for the last 2 years and Mr C was the first to start in this new academical line.* Gastric Juice describes it as *a cramming shop* and expresses the view that the new regulation is a *very good thing: before, by paying £450, any fool or blackguard without education might call himself an officer and a gentleman.*

There were eleven young men there, of various ages from 20 to 25, I should think all exceedingly gentlemanly with but one exception, and his manners and appearance would have disgraced a respectable tap room. In the evening, being the ever memorable 5th of November, we had a capital display of fireworks which went off exceedingly well.

Thursday 6th to Monday 10th Nov

During these few days, as guest(s) of Mr Costin, Sugar Face and Gastric Juice are not forthcoming about their activities, with one very notable exception. Here is Sugar Face's version:

I settled down to enjoy a few days' sojourn in the quiet retirement of the country and in those sports and pastimes which are so charming to our country gentlemen. Our number (15 young men in all) formed a good band for enjoying such amusements. There were 6 horses in the stables and what with riding and driving them, leaping and hunting them after fox hounds, stag hounds and harriers, they had plenty to do.

Then there were at least a dozen dogs of various breeds and sizes and of course, to bring out their mettle, shew their courage and train them to war, there must be a badger. The badger is to be 'baited' or

[102] Barry Alexander Boyd Costin (1831-60) was son of the Professor of Military Drawing at RMC Sandhurst.
[103] 10, High Street, Sandhurst.

'drawn' and now the 15 young men and the 12 dogs congregate around a barrel wherein Old Badgy is confined. The barrel is turned on one side and the badger is exposed to the gaze of the dogs. They positively yell with fury as they catch sight of him and are prevented from flying at him by the collars and chains. At length, one dog is let loose and he dashes in to the badger. A sharp tussle ensues and he catches hold of him by the neck, then a man lays hold of the dogs tail and both dog and badger are drawn out together. This is what is called drawing a badger.

Three dogs, one after the other, were allowed to draw the badger three times each, and that was considered enough for him. There was some blood on the badger's back and he laid down panting inside the barrel when it was over. The dogs were punished about the lips and jaws, all presenting an appearance of having been riddled with shot, so many bites had they. Then a cat was killed in the evening to test the prowess of a young dog. I have no doubt these young men think that they are educating themselves for the scenes of blood and carnage that they may have to go through hereafter.

Whilst Sugar Face seems to take all this in his stride and looks to rationalise these activities, it is Gastric Juice who expresses George Webb Medley's doubts, with his cynicism and sarcasm:

Look at the humane and gentlemanly amusements of these young men: Badger Baiting, Cat Killing and Dog Fighting. How intellectual and how humanizing such pursuits must be to the mind! What can be more delightful than to stand round the barrel wherein a badger is confined and to see a ferocious dog, with fangs an inch long, rush in at him; to hear the fearful struggle within, the snarling, the growling and the yells of agony; to see both dog and badger drawn out together and then two people holding each by the tail – keep them at it for a minute or two – and then to see all this 9 times. What a delicious treat, what trills of excitement it causes. And then to look at a poor cat tied by the neck, with a cord 4 yards long, to a stake, contending and struggling for its very life against its far more powerful adversary, a strong bull terrier. How this must fit these young heroes, these nascent officers and gentlemen, for their future career, and how proud their kin and country ought to be of such young men.

On Saturday 8th, there was a fair at Blackwater Down of which Gastric Juice gives us a few colourful details: *There was a mouse that took a shilling, and a hare that shook hands and played the tambourine and a giant 24 years old, 5 feet 10 ½ in. high, and 37 stone weight, with 6 fingers on each hand and 6 toes on each foot. There was a dwarf about a yard high, perfectly formed, 37 years of age and 45 pounds weight, and a child with hydrocephalus – a head as big as 3 pumpkins, and snakes, and the female Hercules who lifts 600 pounds by the hair of her head, &c., &c.*

On the Monday, Sugar Face *returned to town by the South Western Railway in good health and spirits from my travels and found everybody at Highbury pretty well.* Gastric Juice presumably returned also – and went into permanent retirement.

Chapter 7
Recollections of North Wales
1850

Sugar Face and Gastric Juice having been pensioned off, George Webb Medley, undisguised, now recollects a trip made, with Amelia, the previous year.

On Saturday the 5th October, 1850, I left London by the mail train for Liverpool, from which point I intended, with Amelia, to make a short tour through North Wales. Delightful were the thoughts that crossed my mind as, seated in the luxurious carriage, I was borne with the velocity of the wind through cheerful pastures and sunny meadows. Now, thought I: for a short while I shall leave behind me the cares and troubles of life – "Throw business to the bears", as Shakespeare says[104]. I shall be free from the noise, the dust, the abominations of C – l C – t[105], to breathe the fresh air of the fields, to gaze upon the broad expanse of woods, of rivers, of hill, of dale in all their charming variety without the intervention of hideous brick and mortar.

I purchased Eothen[106] at the Euston station and as I read the picturesque accounts given of Eastern travel with all its accidents and dangers its 'moving incidents by flood and field'[107] I could not but contrast my mode of transit with that of the accomplished Kinglake. I afterwards found, practically, one great point of disparity. Whereas in our author's travels he found the Yellow (the emblem of plague) a colour that invariably caused repulsion between him and those with whom he had to do, I found that this Yellow, in the shape of sovereigns and their demis[108], had a precisely opposite effect upon the natives; in fact it proved an immense source of attraction, drawing smiles and curtseys from landladies, chambermaids, & etc. and extracted civility from every one – no sultan's firman[109] would have been so effective.

After a seven hour journey I was safely set down in the northern metropolis of commerce and a short cab drive placed me at the hospitable door of my uncle.

Uncle William, a Woollen Draper, and Aunt Anne Medley lived (with two servants) at 71, Chatham Street, Liverpool, with their children Samuel, 16; Mary, 15; William, 13; Edward, 9.[110]

Passing over domestic scenes I shall now endeavour to note roughly the objects that fell under my observation.

On Sunday we attended chapel (Dissenters') and in the evening heard a Dr Pennington preach. He is an unmitigated black, an escaped slave and certainly to my astonishment an intellectual and a well educated man. I presume he must have acquired his attainments subsequently to his escape and for that reason he is the more remarkable. A large congregation had assembled to hear him. The spectacle was a novel one. Here was one of the oppressed race of Africa proclaiming the Gospel to an attentive audience of his white brethren, not as one would suppose in the barbarous idiom or imperfect diction common to his people but in as elegant English and with all the philosophy that might be required even from one of our popular preachers.

Thus writes George Webb Medley, brought up in Jamaica, son and grandson of slave-owners. But he himself was in fact one sixteenth black: his mother's mother, Mary Wint being classified a quadroon, i.e. a quarter black, never married George's grandfather John Racker Webb. Dr James William Charles

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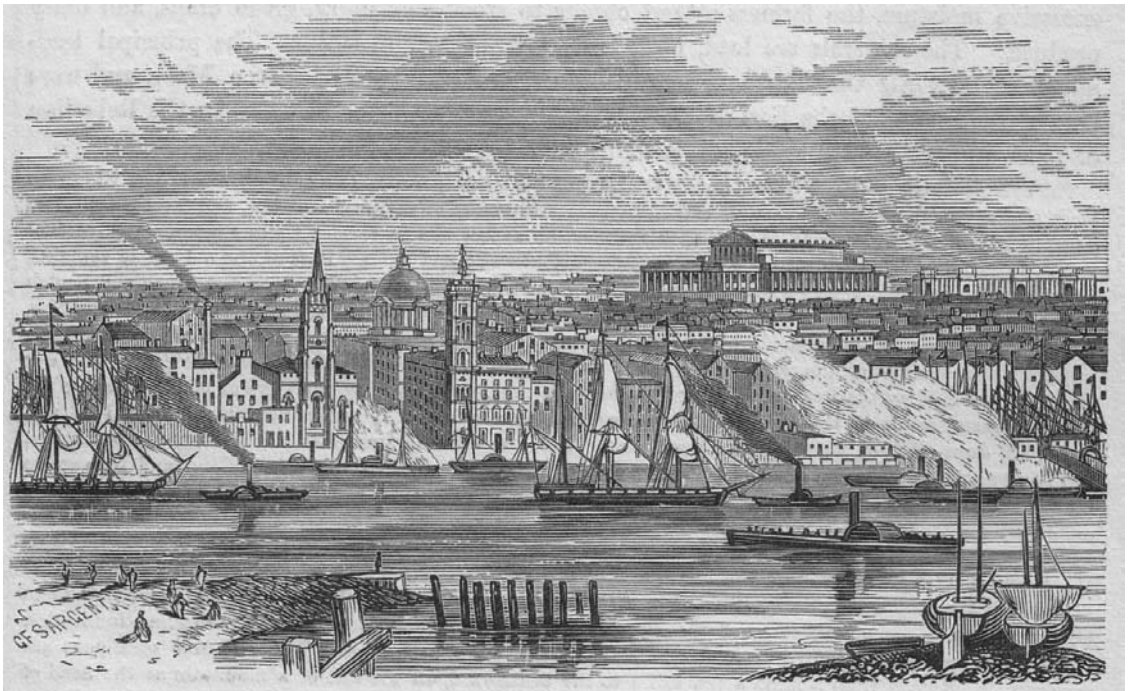
[104] The editor thinks he has made this one up !
[105] Capel Court, home of the Stock Exchange from 1802 to 1854, when it was rebuilt.
[106] *Eothen*, by William Alexander Kinglake (1809-91) was first published in 1844 and broke new ground in travel writing. It is a vivid account of his travels in Turkey, Cyprus, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon and is still in print.
[107] A misquotation of Wordsworth: 'incidents' should be 'accidents'.
[108] i.e. half-sovereigns - gold ten shilling pieces.
[109] A decree or simply a document giving permission of some sort, signed by the sultan. Such a document was necessary for travel in the Turkish Empire.
[110] 1851 census, though Aunt Anne, née Bate, was away then, staying with her mother.

Pennington, African-American minister, teacher and abolitionist, was named at birth Jim Pembroke, a Maryland slave. He was apprenticed to a stonemason and then a blacksmith but ran away, making his way to Pennsylvania where he was taken in by a Quaker and educated. In due course he was ordained and held ministries in Newtown and Hartford, Connecticut. In 1843 he represented Connecticut at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. His autobiographical account of his life as a slave, *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, published in 1850, was well-known. He toured Europe and continued preaching and campaigning until his death in 1870.[111]

On Monday I visited the pier head passing through many busy streets and by many fine buildings – the character of the town however is sombre, caused by the colour of the bricks of which it is built. The same holds good, in a greater degree even, of the suburbs.

At the pier head is an immense landing-stage capable of holding 30,000 persons standing. Over this, throughout the day, is an immense traffic. At the time I was there the tide was at its full – a spring tide. There was also a strong 'Nor' Wester' blowing which rendered the noble Mersey, with its ships, and the Cheshire shore opposite a very striking and exhilarating scene.



Panoramic View of Liverpool,

I afterwards visited the exhibition of the Liverpool Academy, a collection of some 500 paintings, statuary, &c. Here I saw much to admire – there were some paintings that I had previously seen in London.

Modelled on the Royal Academy in London, the Liverpool Academy had held exhibitions and sales of paintings and sculpture since 1810.[112]

On Tuesday the rain poured as it generally does in Liverpool and I was detained a close prisoner indoors all the morning. My captivity however was no unpleasant one, for the time was enlivened by a continuous match at bagatelle[113] between my cousin, my sister and myself, in which the magnitude of our scores could not be contained in the ordinary pegging holds, but was obliged to be committed to paper.

[111] http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/discovery/people/bio.pennington.html 25.4.07.
[112] http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/history/1819-1871.asp 25.4.07.
[113] John Jaques' Bagatelle, 'as supplied to Queen Victoria', is still available.

The afternoon was fine and we three crossed the river to Egremont a place about a quarter of an hour's steam towards the sea.

It is not clear which cousin accompanied George and Amelia but it was perhaps Mary, fifteen in 1850, since she appears, on the census the following year, as being no longer a scholar but not employed either, whereas Samuel, sixteen in 1850, was already a clerk then.

On our return to the pier, an unfortunate cow that was being landed appeared to have had a violent longing for an aquatic excursion. The wretched animal fell overboard and was quickly borne towards the sea by a tide that was resistless. Its ultimate fate I know not; the last I saw of it was a speck in the dim twilight, two boats in full pursuit and a crowd of people keeping pace and enjoying what I believe is not a very unusual occurrence. But to return to our muttons[114], this subject reminds me that a splendid tunnel is formed under the town as far as Edge Hill on the opposite side for the sole purpose of driving the cattle from the vessels to the expectant trains that will bear them to London to be beef-i-fied – or vilified as the case may be.

On Wednesday, we three inspected St. George's Hall, a building that will be, in outward appearance at least, one of the most imposing in the world. I only impart my own private opinion. Of friezes and columns and shafts and all the etceteras of architecture I am as ignorant as a cow is of Astronomy, so let no one who perchance may visit the place be disappointed and write me down an ass for my pains.

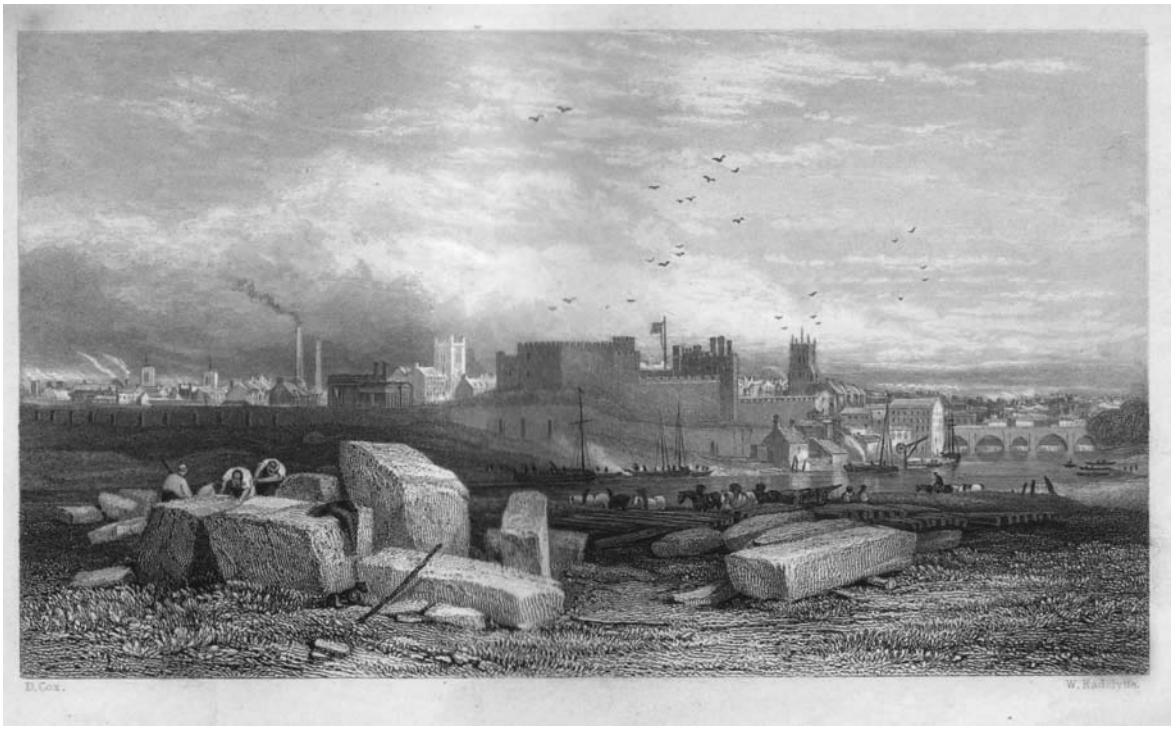
St George's Hall, Liverpool, which has been described as the finest neo-classical building in Europe, was designed by Harvey Lonsdale Elmes. Building commenced in 1842, but it was not completed and opened until September 1854. [115]

We next walked through the town hall, or rather the staterooms thereof. They appeared well fitted – indeed, they were perfectly adapted for their intended purposes, i.e. guzzling and dancing &c. A short time will show the Liverpool Town Council following in the wake of their elder brethren – the Corporation of London – as regards their immemorial rotundity and fondness for feeding. These Liverpuddlian Civics dine once a week here!! We then ascended the spire to have a good look from such an eminence, but how grievously we were disappointed. Oh! London, thou much aspersed city, thine atmosphere is clear as crystal, bright as an orient gem, compared to the dim, murky, hazy, misty, foggy, dreary, muggy, dismal dull humidity that hung its vapours over the town. Talk of London smoke! Enlarge upon London fog! Why, the smoke or fog in Liverpool is of the consistency of good strong pea soup! Henceforth, oh London, let thy character and thy atmosphere be clear in the eyes of the world.

On Thursday it rained again. Again was the bagatelle board put in requisition and, again we commenced and persevered in our interminable games. <u>That</u> day came to an end and on Friday we packed up our traps and by 10 o'clock were en route to Chester, accompanied by an uncle, an aunt, a cousin <u>not</u> female[116] and a non-descript relation that <u>was</u> female, being married to my grandfather's wife's sister's son[117].

We sailed from Birkenhead to Chester, having first crossed the Mersey by the ferry, and were set down in the old city of Chester which we take to be the starting point of our journey. The four of us walked round the walls that encircle the city, climbed the tower wherefrom the unfortunate Charles the First saw the defeat of his army on Rowton Moor.

[114] i.e. to return to the subject in hand.
[115] http://www.visitliverpool.com/site/product-p8033 30.4.07.
[116] This could be Samuel, aged 17 (but he was employed as a clerk and so perhaps would not have been available), or William (14) or Edward (10), but probably they should both have been at school !
[117] This 'grandfather's wife' was not his (Medley) grandmother, who had died, but was presumably the second wife, Elizabeth née Smallshaw, of grandfather Samuel Medley (1796-1857).



Chester

They will have climbed the Phoenix Tower, also known as King Charles's Tower 'to commemorate the events of September 1645, during the English Civil War, when King Charles I, together with the mayor, Sir Francis Gamul, stood on the roof and witnessed the rout of his army by Parliamentary forces (on Hoole Heath) after the battle of Rowton Moor', September 24th, 1645.[118]

We duly moralized upon this circumstance and I hope drew the proper conclusions and were walking away when our ears were saluted with "Only tuppence Marm.", "Very clear today Marm", "Only tuppence, some so pleased they gives a shillin'." At the same time the door in the tower flew open and we saw a man arranging a telescope for viewing the country round. Now was it not sacrilege to have noble emotions chilled and magniloquent thoughts checked in this rude way? Making the Stylite[119] a profound bow, I left him to his matutinal[120] meditations.

We visited the cathedral and admired everything that was to be admired. Among other things we saw the old stone coffin of some old baron, almost as good as new. It had been opened about five years ago and the only thing that was in preservation was a skull. This the verger told us, whereupon I tapped the coffin learnedly and thence inferred and expressed something favourable to the mental capacity of its quondam tenant, from the remarkable circumstances mysteriously imparted by the eminent church dignitary at our side. I left school ten years ago[121] and now I was to evince the incalculable advantage of having learned Latin. Actually decyphered and construed an ancient inscription upon a tomb stone! Only think of that! And this too in the presence of the ladies – what a glorious opportunity for shewing my erudition!

We then stood for about ten minutes listening to the enchanting voices of the choristers as they practised their anthems in an apartment adjoining the cathedral. Then we visited the Chapter room and library where we handled and poked our learned noses into the musty volumes, thick controversial tomes and polemical works, with a sort of puzzled shake-head air that was sometimes ridiculous. It was evident to the meanest capacity – even the verger's – that the subjects treated and the manner of treating were far beyond us. So passing out of the fusty place we emerged into the cloisters where the monks of old used to perambulate, shutting out the world without but unable to eject the world within.

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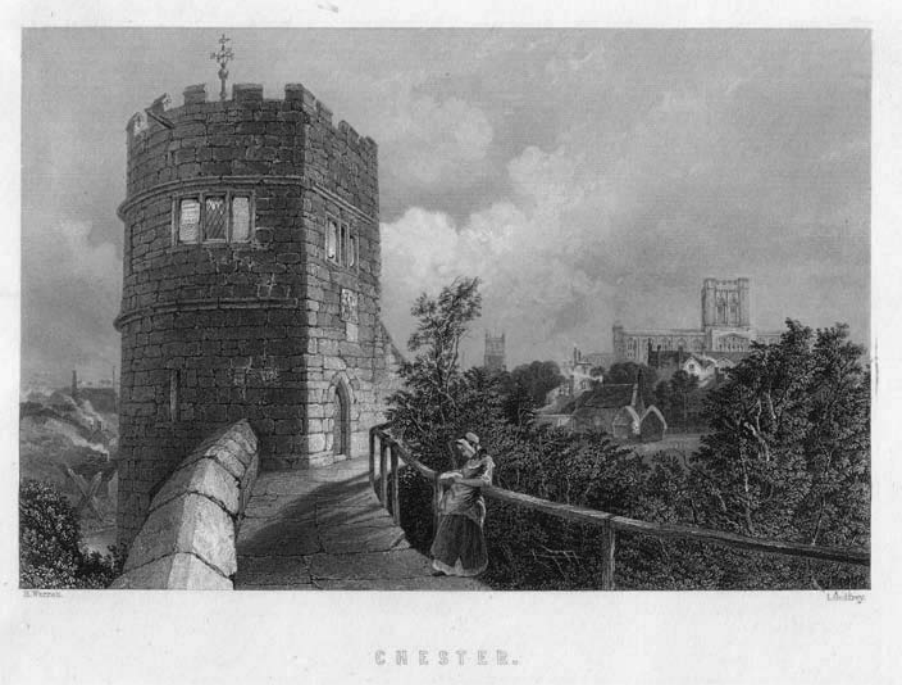
[118] http://www.bwpics.co.uk/phoenix.html 30.4.07.

[119] i.e. one who perches on a pillar, in this case the Phoenix Tower. A real Stylite would be pillar-perching in order to fast and pray, not to sell telescope-viewing time.

[120] of the morning.

[121] i.e. at the age of 15, when he returned from Jamaica with his family.



From this a flight of steps led us upon the walls and it was something of a relief to gaze again upon the fair face of nature after the contemplation of these bygone superstitions. A turn in the walls threw open to our view the Dee, its waterfall and its beautiful bridge; also the fine viaduct for the railway that was the scene of a fearful accident some two or three years ago.

'Numerous new bridges were needed when the railway line from London to Holyhead in Wales was built in the 1840s. The project's chief engineer, Robert Stephenson, chose a cast iron girder design to cross the river Dee just outside Chester, and the bridge was finished in November 1846. About six months later, on 24 May 1847, a local train was crossing the final span when one of the girders failed suddenly, sending most of the train crashing into the river below. Five lives were lost. The accident created a national furore, and Stephenson came close to being accused of manslaughter for the design. … The bridge probably failed by fatigue due to a defect at a sharp corner in a flange on a girder. The corner was present in a cavetto moulding, which had presumably been added as an artistic flourish.' [122]

The views from the walls are very varied and would take a month to describe. Our next and last attempt at sight-seeing in Chester was to walk through the covered ways or Rows, in which some considerable part of the city is built.

Hicklin's *Excursions in North Wales*[123], an edition of which George and Amelia seem to have been using, mentions that the Rows, 'in which the principal mercantile establishments are situated … (are) as interesting to the antiquarian as they are convenient for a quiet lounge to ladies and others engaged in "shopping"'.

[122] Lewis, P. & Gagg, C.: *Aesthetics versus function: the fall of the Dee bridge, 1847,* Interdisciplinary Science Reviews, 2004, Vol. 29, No. 2.
[123] Hicklin, J. (ed.): *Excursions in North Wales: a complete guide to the tourist through that romantic country*, London, 1847, 1848, 1851, etc.

After a slight dinner, our friends departed for home, while we took train for Mold, our evening resting place. Before we went to roost we climbed up the hill behind the town from which we had a magnificent prospect. Nay, don't be alarmed! I am not going to describe it: it would only be inflicting my dullness upon you and thank goodness a power of description is not a point with me as with most authors. I shall only remark that our view was bounded by a range of hills on one of which, Moel Fammau, a Jubilee Column was erected (in 1810) *to commemorate the 50th year of King George the Third's reign.*

Below us lay a fertile valley interspersed with dwellings of all kinds – from the lordly mansion to the humble cot – while (to complete the picture) the Alyn wound its course throughout, adding grace and beauty to the scene. The spot upon which we stood was a singular one: upon the summit of the hill, the natives have constructed a bowling green! It is certainly a very level and capital one, with forms and a covered place for the players, the whole space having palings around it.

The game of bowls appears to be a sort of national sport with the Welsh. I suppose, from the difficulty of obtaining level pieces of ground, a sort of rabid desire for the game arose which spent itself in these out of the way places.

We then walked round the fine old church which we duly admired and took notice of the longevity of the dead. We also noticed two old tombs in good preservation, dating from about 1614.

From Mold, on the Saturday morning, we took car to Ruthin and did not notice anything very particular on the way except that the costume and cottages and stone walls reminded us that we were gradually withdrawing from Old England. At Ruthin the size of our good hostess astonished us: she has a chair made on purpose to hold her. We then viewed the grounds and the outside of Ruthin Castle, the seat of the Honourable Frederick West (M.P. for Denbigh, 1847-57) *who has erected a very elegant castellated mansion within the walls of the old castle, the architect having blended the modern structure within the ancient ruin so as to produce a very fine effect.*

After passing through numberless passages, cells and dungeons, and having made a complete circuit of the place and seen all that was to be seen, we then very naturally walked away. The church next drew our attention but there was nothing worth seeing inside or out – it was a fusty place. However, we were highly amused by the pomposity of (I believe he called himself) the sweeper. We were just taking a look round the place and were walking away when the little man ran up to us and was at no little pains to make us understand that the confusion we saw in the pews &c. was "owing to the instrumentality of the gas". It appears that this benighted people have only just now been able to exchange their guttering tallow dips for gaslight and the workmen were busy in the operation.

Furthermore, Taff accompanied us round the churchyard and told us many things in a most bombastic inflated manner, using the longest and hardest words he could think of. He pointed out to us a tombstone somewhat in this manner: "Now Sir, there, is a tomb in which no person lies interred. I dare say, Sir, you have never experienced a tomb in which nobody was interred. This erection, Sir, was accomplished by a person, Sir, with whom I venture to say you are acquainted, Sir – Mr Ellis, Sir, the celebrated Soda Water Manufacturer of Mold. He had long been premeditating, Sir, and was afraid of being neglected after his decease, so he raised the present erection to commemorate his memory". Such was the substance of his speech to us, but it was delivered in a more disconnected manner. At the long words, he made pauses and with great exertion jerked them forth.

From Ruthin we proceeded to Denbigh, but before I proceed further (I beg just to say that this is all written from memory which will account for one or two things being out of place) I have to mention the impressions made upon us when, at a sudden turn in the road, the beautiful Vale of Clwyd burst upon our sight. It was indeed charming and delightful, for the valley lay spread at our feet, a most complete panorama. The first view was the best for at every step our elevation was less until at length we were set upon the plain. This valley is 24 miles long and contains several towns which formed the resting points of our journey as here noted.

We had now arrived at Denbigh. There was nothing particularly remarkable on the way. We took notice however, at this and at subsequent periods, of the beauty of the children – their cleanliness and generally pleasing effect. The young women also were generally pretty, but the men could not be highly commended. There were many gentlemen's seats and parks, indeed the Vale seems to be a very favourite place, everything betokening the very highest state of cultivation.

We next visited the ruins of Denbigh Castle, formerly one of the strongest fortresses in the principality. I must refer those who desire a description to the guide book[124]*, page 107, where they will find many interesting particulars.*

The guide book says that 'the whole of the rooms and towers are in state of the utmost dilapidation' but that the castle is 'situated on the summit of the Caled-Vryn, an isolated limestone rock, rising abruptly to the height of two hundred and forty feet from the western boundary of the Vale of Clwyd'.

In this place also there is a bowling green apparently belonging to the Corporation – it is levelled within the walls of the castle.

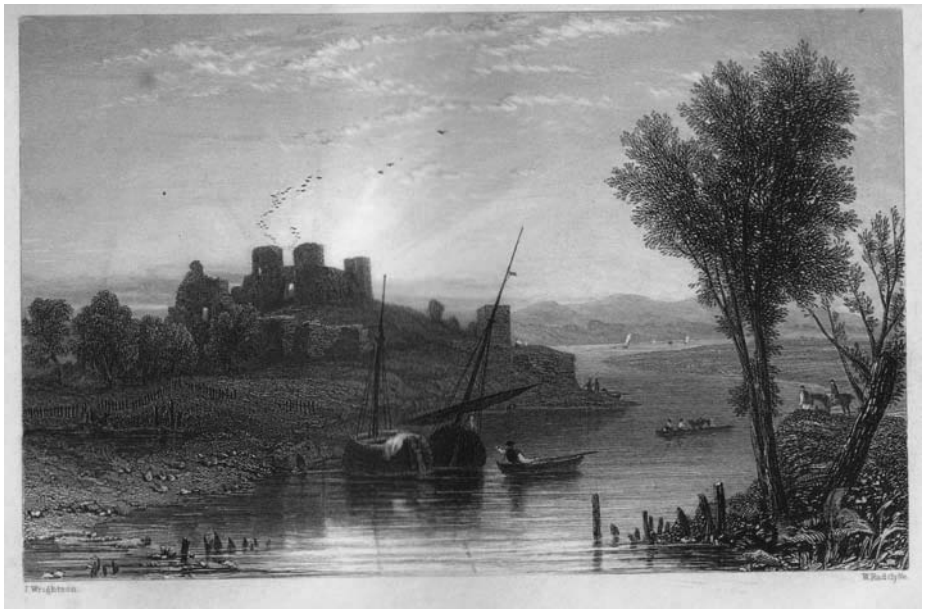
From hence we wended our way to St Asaph, where we passed the night. On the following morning (Sunday), we attended the cathedral service and heard the Right Rev'd Bishop preach. We recognised him to be an old acquaintance of ours, having heard him in London when he was Sodor and Man. The cathedral is a modern one and consequently possesses no attractions for the archaeologist or antiquary. It is, however, the third structure that has been raised upon the spot.

St Asaph

On Monday morning, we set out for Rhyl, a station on the Holyhead line, intending to rail to Bangor. Between St. Asaph and Rhyl, we passed Pengwern, the seat of Lord Mostyn – truly a noble place; also Rhyddlan Castle, the scene of that late national gathering, the Eisteddfod. From this point we had again a capital view of the Vale of Clwyd.

[124] An edition of Hicklin, J.: *op. cit*..

At Rhyl we joined the train and presently were charmed by a prospect of the valley from another point of view, Rhyddlan Castle forming a beautiful object in the scene which stretched far into the interior, we being on the sea coast. It was with regret that we bid farewell to our old friend the Vale who had afforded us such enjoyment.



Rhyddlan Castle and River Clwyd

Passing along the coast, the next place that attracts attention is Conway, with its tubular bridge, its castle and its suspension bridge[125]*. Here we did not stop so I have nothing to remark.* Roscoe, on the other hand, observes that the bridge 'presents an appearance singularly elegant, lying at the foot of the antique castle, and surrounded by scenery of the most picturesque description'[126].

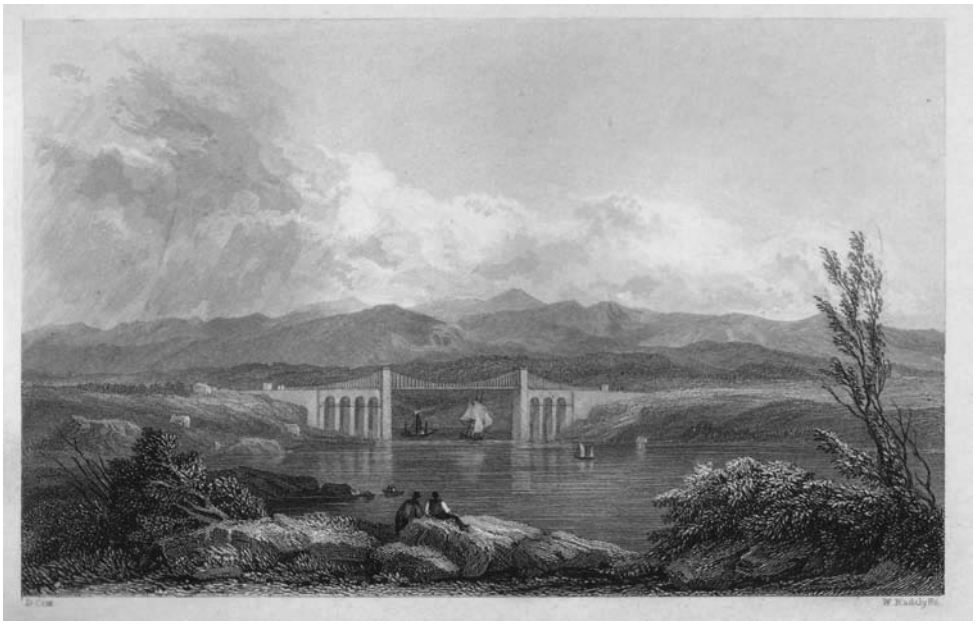
Conway

We duly arrived at Bangor and put up at the Penrhyn Arms[127]*, a fine hotel with beautiful grounds at the back, commanding a fine view. After dinner we sallied forth to inspect the Menai bridges. The walk up the*

[125] The tubular bridge, designed by Robert Stephenson (1803-1859) was part of the Chester to Holyhead railway and its main span is 125 metres. The Conway steel suspension bridge, designed by Thomas Telford (1757-1834), was built between 1822 and 1826.

[126] Roscoe, T., *Wanderings and Excursions in North Wales,* Tilt, Simpkin & Co., London, n.d., c. 1836, p.193.

hill whose brow we had to surmount was truly terrible under our then present circumstances. Only imagine agonizing uphill for about two miles immediately after a good dinner! Dyspepsia and all its attendant horrors took possession of our fainting bodies and, as we leaned against a stone wall for support, we no doubt formed an admirable group of Searchers after the Picturesque. We at length summoned up sufficient strength to continue our journey, keeping our goal, the suspension bridge, in constant view to reanimate our lagging steps.



The Menai Bridge

At length we reached this wonderful fabric and passed over in perfect safety ! You have doubtless seen or read of this bridge so I need not nauseate you with a thrice told tale. The extremely novel and peculiarly interesting event of a donkey and cart passing over at the same time with us lent a piquant charm to our transit. (Now I venture to say that no tourist and scribbler ever wrote a finer bit than this last – only think of my inventive or rather observant genius in extracting pleasantness out of an ass).

Roscoe[128], who never had the good fortune to meet Medley's ass, nevertheless describes with enthusiasm 'this magnificent proof of human ingenuity and power':…'Seen, as I approached it, in the light of a clear autumnal sun-set, which threw a splendour over the wide range of hills beyond, and the sweep of richly variegated groves and plantations which covered their base – the bright river – the rocky, picturesque foreground – villas, spires, and towers here and there enlivening the prospect, – it appeared more like the work of some great magician than the result of man's skill and industry.' This bridge, by Thomas Telford, was opened in 1826. 'It appears considerably more than one thousand feet in length, and its height one hundred feet above high water mark.'

We were now on the Anglesey shore with a good view of the Tubular Bridge towards which we wended our way. This bridge, by Robert Stephenson, had been opened on 5th March that year, 1850, and carried the railway inside 1500 ton tubes of rectangular section.

Then – oh happy thought! – it struck us that by going a little further on we should get to Llanfair – a little, very little, place, but a station on the Holyhead line. Quick as lightning did Bradshaw, that invaluable travellers' Vade Mecum, burst from my pocket, and quicker still did my devouring eyes scan its interesting pages to discover the times and the hours of the trains. Hurrah!! There's one at 40 minutes past 5, but what's the time now? Oh heavens! My watch! I can't trust it. There has been an inveterate diversity between it and every clock everywhere who have all set their faces against him. I am certain there has been a conspiracy to put mine out of countenance and compel him to cover his face with his hands from shame.

[127] An old coaching inn which became the home of the University College of North Wales in 1884. Roscoe (*op. cit*., footnote, p. 167.) describes it as 'a princely establishment' leaving 'nothing to be desired by the most fastidious traveller'.

[128] Roscoe. T.: *op. cit*, p.169.

As explained in Chapter 4, there was likely to be some reasonable uncertainty in George's mind as to whether or not the Holyhead line would be operating according to Greenwich mean time or a local mean time.

Oh! The confusion that arises from some keeping London time and some Dublin time – it was always "20 minutes too soon Sir" or "You're a quarter of an hour too late Sir". For now the horrible thought arose of our being left to perish here, actually 5 miles from home!! I was irresistibly reminded of that extremely affecting history The Babes in the Wood, when I thought of our forlorn condition. And look! There are the blackberries on which we were to feed, and there also the very wren that was to cover us!! The thought was horrible. My maddened brain conceived the idea of working out some abstruse astronomical observation in order to arrive at the true time. It was fruitless however, but by a gigantic effort of memory I recollected something about the true difference of time. We had just 10 minutes to spare, but how far we had to go we knew not. We must try for it however and we started off at full gallop – Away! Away!

Those who have read Mazeppa[129] *will be able feebly to imagine our progress to the station where we arrived at last, breathless, dishevelled, done up. What a delightful haven of rest did that station seem to us under these dreadful circumstances. At length we jumped into the train and it was with peculiar feelings of awe and excitement that I felt myself enter those mighty tubes with their colossal lions at the entrance that seem to guard the gloomy way.* The limestone lions, four metres high, on plinths of the same height, were carved by John Thomas whose work also graces Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament.[130]

Twas with a low rumbling roaring sound that we passed through and, when we emerged upon the opposite bank and gazed at the chasm over which we had passed with such ease, I could not but offer my tribute of admiration at the genius of the man that planned and executed this mighty work. I only regret that the dreadful state of mind from which I was suffering prevented my appreciating it as much as I ought to have done.

Upon being set down at the Bangor station, we had still a mile to travel before we could arrive at our hotel, which was situated at the other side of the town.

Our troubles were not yet to end. A most violent shower of rain poured unmercifully upon us, but we heeded it not. We had grown callous to all outward things – Plash! – Plash! Plash! – on we went heedless of everything. The darkness came on and we lost our way. Our umbrella, a lady's one, was useless. As my sister held it, it only dripped down my neck. At length we found the hotel, and most thankful were we to gain shelter under its hospitable roof.

Thus terminated this day's adventures. Subsequent reflection has convinced me that our fears, when in Anglesey, were groundless, and after mature consideration I have been led to believe that they must have arisen in some measure from indigestion. I hope this will be a warning to all future travellers.

Upon the following morning, Tuesday, we climbed a hill that faced the hotel from whose brow we anticipated a fine view and, when we did arrive at the top, we did indeed have a splendid view – a view that beggars all my powers of description.

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[129] Lord Byron wrote this poem which was based on the true story of Mazeppa from Voltaire's *The History of Charles XII, King of Sweden*. A Polish noble named Mazeppa, who had been born in the Palatinate of Podolia, had been a page to King John Casimir and had acquired a little learning at his court. In his youth he had an affair with the wife of another Polish nobleman. When the husband discovered it, he had him tied stark naked on the back of a wild horse and let him loose in that state. The horse, which came from the Ukraine, returned there, carrying Mazeppa, half-dead from fatigue and hunger. Some peasants succoured him, and he remained among them for a long time, distinguishing himself in several expeditions against the Tartars. His superior learning gave him great prestige among the Cossacks; finally, his daily-increasing reputation forced the Tsar to make him prince of the Ukraine. (http://readytogoebooks.com/MZP-P21.htm 23.4.07)

[130] http://www.anglesey-history.co.uk/places/bridges/ 14.5.07.

It was a most various and diversified view of islands, capes, headlands, the sea, the straits, ships, mountains, valleys, pastures, woods, a castle, a park, hills, cottages, rivers and almost everything that renders a picture beautiful.

To the left lay the Isle of Anglesey with its fertile lands. Underneath, on the shore, Beaumaris gleamed in the sun, and its sands stretched far away forming a beautiful bay. Close under us, but partly hidden by trees, lay the town, and some small craft. Opposite us, in the distance, was the Great Ormes Head.

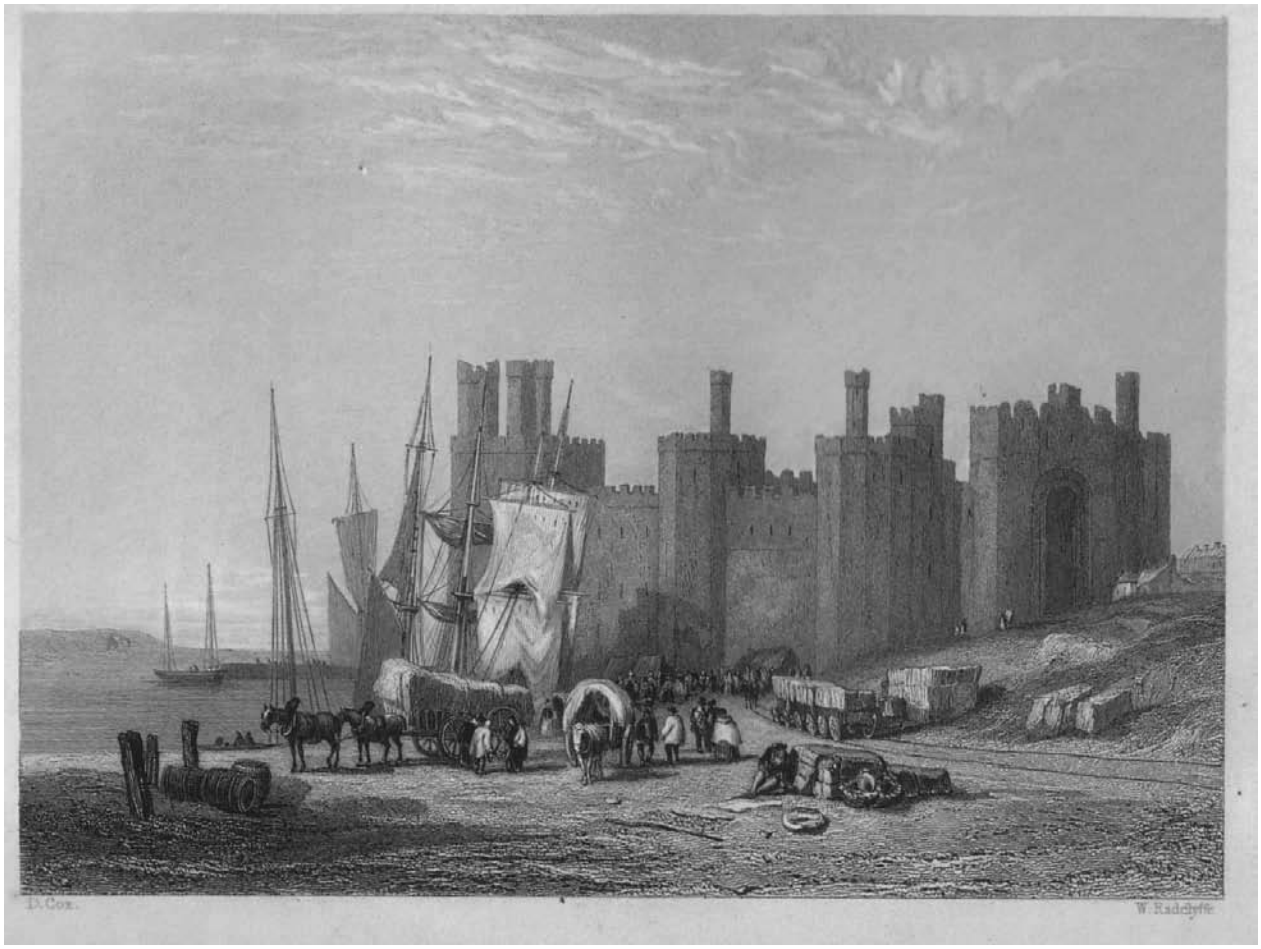
Beaumaris

Closer, to the right, rose a bold headland which was the first of a range of hills, between which and the hill on we now stood was a beautiful valley with Penrhyn Castle from whose high tower floated a blood red banner.

Penrhyn Castle

Coming down the hill, having sated our eyes with the view, we set to gathering and eating blackberries, of which there was abundance, and were thus amusing ourselves when, in looking over a stone wall into a wood, we beheld to our intense astonishment two animated bits of toasted cheese in quick motion!! Will the reader believe me when I most solemnly assert that we saw two Welch Rabbits!!

It seems that the alternative spelling 'Rarebit' for the toasted melted cheese on toast recipes (of which there were also English, Scottish, and Irish equivalents) was an invention of the second half of the nineteenth century. [131]

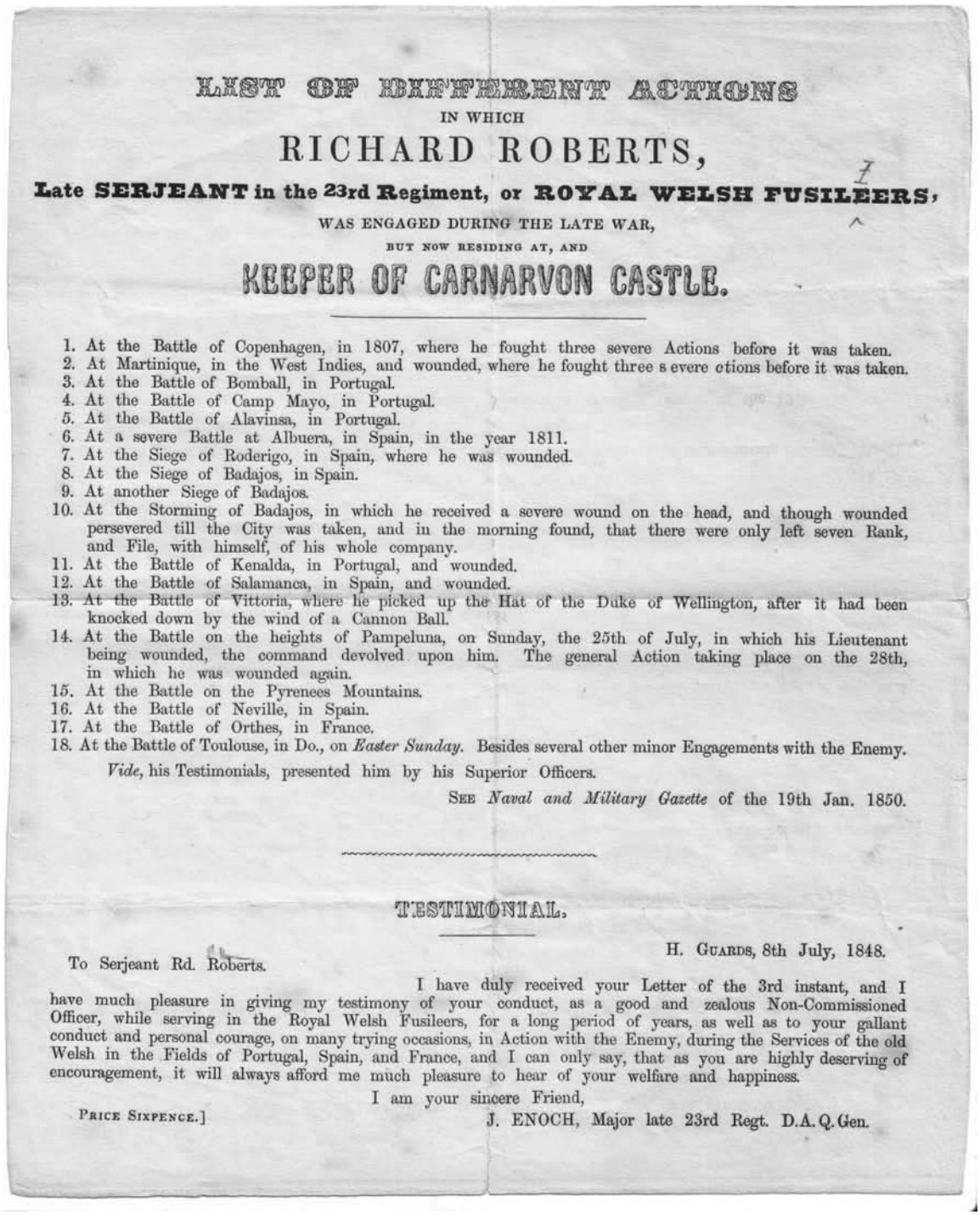


Caernarvon

From Bangor we took coach to Caernarvon and on the road saw Snowdon for the first time rearing his pointed head high in the clouds. He was uncapped – this was a courtesy he rarely practises – and accordingly we, to whom so great a distinction was shewn, were duly sensible of the honour paid us. On arrival we put up at that fine hotel The Uxbridge Arms[132] *and in the afternoon strolled through the town…*
Hicklin writes: 'The modern town' …(is)… 'as pleasant and commodious a place of residence as the most fastidious nabob – to say nothing of Lady Welshmen and pedestrian ramblers – could possibly desire.'[133]

As regards the castle, George Medley says : … *very few traces of destroying time were to be distinguished, but when we entered the fine old gateway and passed into the castle itself, the havoc around told the tale. We saw here*[134] *one of the old Peninsular heroes, Serg't Roberts of the famous 23*[d] *Royal Welsh Fusiliers, who had been rewarded for his long services in being made keeper of the castle: his 23 battles are chronicled in the paper annexed.*

[131] http://www.journalofantiques.com/hearthmay.htm 26.4.07.
[132] Now the Celtic Royal Hotel, which was at that time known as the Uxbridge Arms. It derived its name from the Earl of Uxbridge, father of the Marquis of Anglesey who lost a leg when commanding the cavalry at the Battle of Waterloo.
[133] Hicklin, J.: *op. cit*.
[134] Caernarfon Castle remains the home of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers Museum.



LIST OF DIFFERENT ACTIONS

IN WHICH

RICHARD ROBERTS,

Late SERJEANT in the 23rd Regiment, or ROYAL WELSH FUSILEERS,

WAS ENGAGED DURING THE LATE WAR,

BUT NOW RESIDING AT, AND

KEEPER OF CARNARVON CASTLE.

1. At the Battle of Copenhagen, in 1807, where he fought three severe Actions before it was taken.
2. At Martinique, in the West Indies, and wounded, where he fought three severe actions before it was taken.
3. At the Battle of Bomball, in Portugal.
4. At the Battle of Camp Mayo, in Portugal.
5. At the Battle of Alavinsa, in Portugal.
6. At a severe Battle at Albuera, in Spain, in the year 1811.
7. At the Siege of Roderigo, in Spain, where he was wounded.
8. At the Siege of Badajos, in Spain.
9. At another Siege of Badajos.
10. At the Storming of Badajos, in which he received a severe wound on the head, and though wounded persevered till the City was taken, and in the morning found, that there were only left seven Rank, and File, with himself, of his whole company.
11. At the Battle of Kenalda, in Portugal, and wounded.
12. At the Battle of Salamanca, in Spain, and wounded.
13. At the Battle of Vittoria, where he picked up the Hat of the Duke of Wellington, after it had been knocked down by the wind of a Cannon Ball.
14. At the Battle on the heights of Pampeluna, on Sunday, the 25th of July, in which his Lieutenant being wounded, the command devolved upon him. The general Action taking place on the 28th, in which he was wounded again.
15. At the Battle on the Pyrenees Mountains.
16. At the Battle of Neville, in Spain.
17. At the Battle of Orthes, in France.
18. At the Battle of Toulouse, in Do., on *Easter Sunday*. Besides several other minor Engagements with the Enemy.

Vide, his Testimonials, presented him by his Superior Officers.

SEE *Naval and Military Gazette* of the 19th Jan. 1850.

TESTIMONIAL.

H. GUARDS, 8th July, 1848.

To Serjeant Rd. Roberts.

I have duly received your Letter of the 3rd instant, and I have much pleasure in giving my testimony of your conduct, as a good and zealous Non-Commissioned Officer, while serving in the Royal Welsh Fusileers, for a long period of years, as well as to your gallant conduct and personal courage, on many trying occasions, in Action with the Enemy, during the Services of the old Welsh in the Fields of Portugal, Spain, and France, and I can only say, that as you are highly deserving of encouragement, it will always afford me much pleasure to hear of your welfare and happiness.

I am your sincere Friend,

PRICE SIXPENCE.] J. ENOCH, Major late 23rd Regt. D.A.Q.Gen.

From the Eagle Tower we saw the sun set in clouds of flame; after seeing old Sol to his fiery couch we strolled onto the pier. From this we had a delightful view of the whole town, the castle and the walls that surround them all. Twas night and o'er the moon-lit sea a soft wind blew that gently curled the rippling waves upon the shore. Nought was to be heard save, now and then, the plashing of an oar or the measured tread of him who kept the pier. All was rest and quiet and for an hour were we gazing on the sea, lost in contemplation's dream, until the arrival of the ferry awoke us to life and consciousness.

In the morning we ascended the Twt Hill, an eminence immediately behind the hotel, that commands an extensive prospect described by Roscoe[135] *as "a varied panoramic view including part of the Snowdon range, the isle of Anglesey with its plains, farms and villas, backed by the mountains of Holyhead and Parys, – the swelling Menai, – and the blue and spacious bay, with the sea stretching far beyond."*

[135] Roscoe, T.: *op. cit.* The first edition was 1836.

Snowdon from Harlech Castle

We then set out upon our homeward route in one of the Welsh Cars, the only carriage used in conveying tourists over the mountains – indeed it is almost the only conveyance throughout North Wales. They do very well except in point of space, for we found our knees in constant antagonism – it must be a regular squeeze when their complement of four is made up.

Now commenced the most splendid part of our journey. The way for a few miles lay up hill and as we gradually ascended, the country opened behind us forming a beautiful panorama. We were now travelling to Llanberris, a romantic village at the foot of Snowdon. We had to ride along the margin of the two lakes that spread their waters in the very bosom of the mountain, dark and still. A little stream connects the two lakes and by this stood the ruins of Dolbadarn Castle.

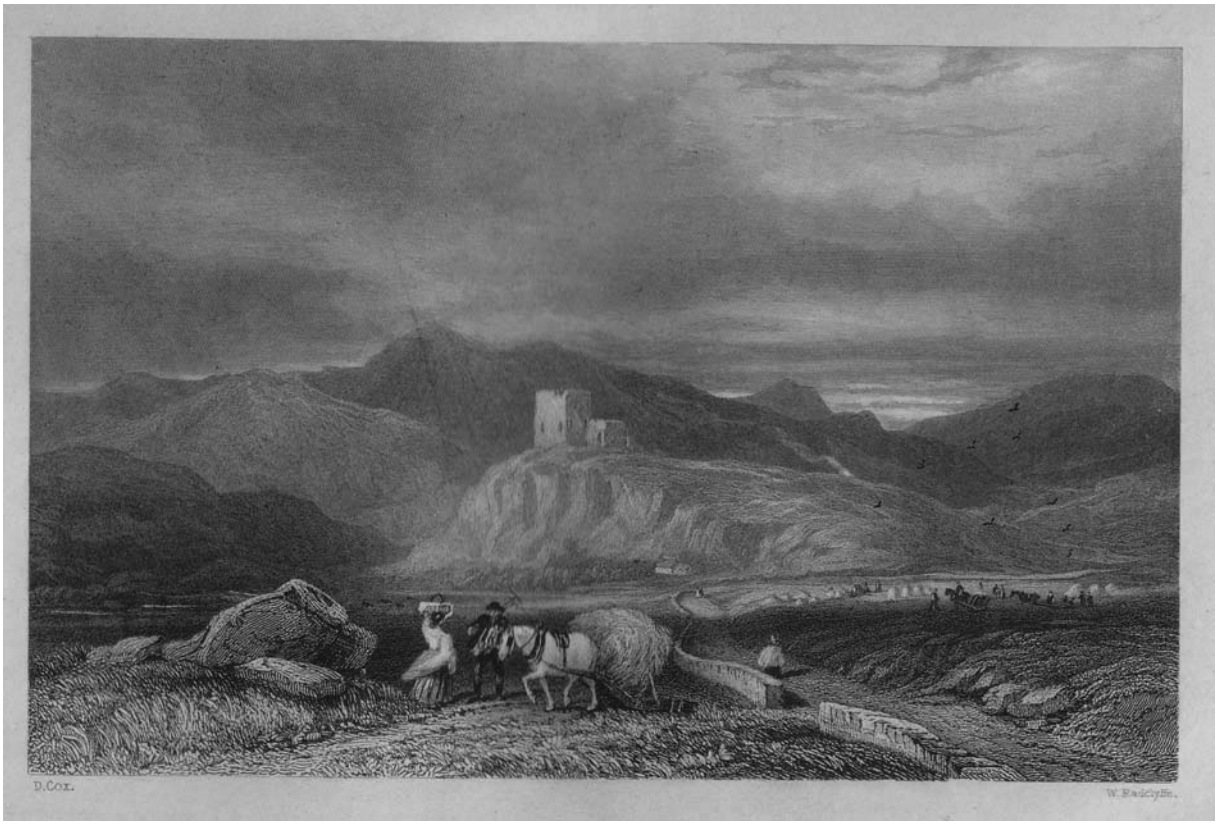
Dolbadern Tower

I hardly need say that altogether this was a wild romantic scene, alike suggestive to the painter and the poet. We next went about half a mile south of the castle to see Ceunant Mawr – the Waterfall of the Great

Chasm. The fall is upwards of 60 feet in depth. We stopped at the inn to take lunch and then proceeded through the far-famed pass of Llanberis, the grandest wildest place we saw in Wales; the road for two or three miles was between high mountains on both sides, with innumerable streams running down them into a larger one that rolled along its rocky bed, foaming and fretting in its uneasy course.

The mountains are formed of solid rock upon which no tree grows, but merely a stunted herbage. Masses of rocks, some of vast size, have detached themselves from the overhanging cliff and lay strewed in our path. It seemed as if it had formed the arena of some tremendous battle in the times of the giants who had used these fearful weapons, tearing the very rocks up in their fury and hurling them at their foes. One of these large stones (The Cromlech) *is some thousand tons weight and, having fallen at an angle with the ground, it was once used as the habitation of an old woman* ('who in summer resided in the Vale to feed and milk her cows'[136]).

I forgot to mention that, before we came to Dolbadarn Castle, we saw the remains of one of a very ancient date about A.D. 500 I believe, but I cannot recollect the name just now.



Dolwyddelan Castle

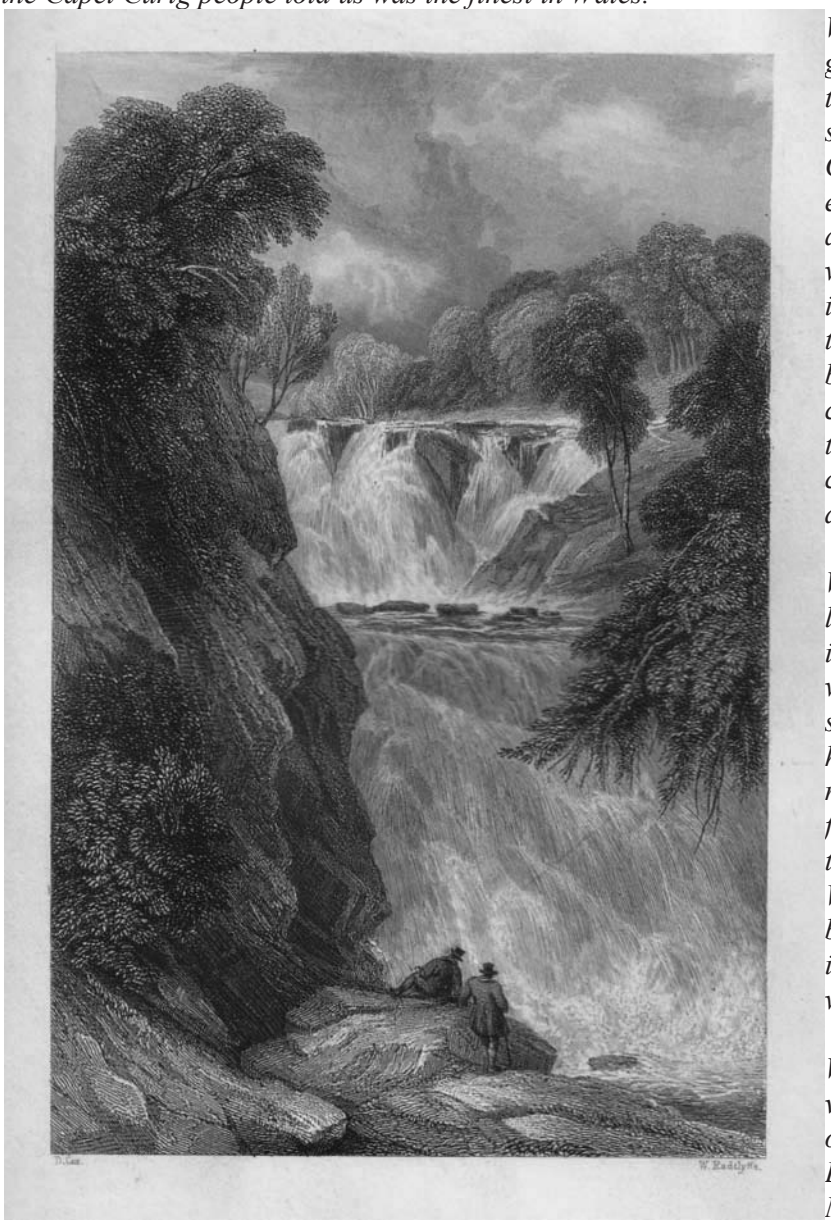
The castle of which George has forgotten the name was Dolwyddelan Castle, supposed birthplace of Llewelyn the Great and possibly the last stronghold to hold out against Edward I.[137]

But by this time I began to be satiated with castles and would pass them with indifference. They irresistibly led me into a peculiar train of thought – I could not but fancy that those were times (I mean Edward the First's reign) for cultivating the Royal Game of Chess, and that Edward and Llewelyn were accomplished in the sport. What a magnificent chess board was Wales. How well did they 'seize the open files' with their castles – even such a one as this very Pass of Llanberis How well did they know the value of Knight and Bishop and Queen and what brilliant sacrifices did they make of their Pawns, who I suppose represent their common soldiery. Truly I could not help thinking of all this and how, if I were now to play a game, I should immediately offer to give my adversary a castle to begin with. Edward I was reputed to play chess but, although there are Welsh chess sets made with Llewelyn as the King, there seem no reason to

[136] Hicklin, J.: *op. cit*., ca. p.140.
[137] Hicklin, J.: *op. cit*., ca. p.83.

think of him as a chess player. But George, an outstanding chess player himself, is doubtless writing metaphorically.

Our next stopping place was Capel Curig, where we passed the night. On the following morning we proceeded on our way, passing the celebrated Rhaidr–y-Wennol[138] *(or the Waterfall of the Swallow) which the Capel Curig people told us was the finest in Wales.*



Rhaiadr y Wenol near Capel Curig

We had now passed the terrible and grand views of our journey and were to travel through lovely and sweet scenes. The ride from Capel Curig to Corwen is beautiful and striking in the extreme. There is variety at every step and the time of the year and the fine weather we had enabled us to enjoy it in perfection. The foliage had put on the golden tints of autumn and the bright sun shining, the roaring of the cataracts, the gurgling of the streams, the mild and genial air, all contributed to render this stage delightful.

We arrived for the night at Corwen, a little agricultural town of some 2000 inhabitants. At this place the paper on which this is written was bought at the same shop where they sell red herrings, scrubbing brushes, oils with many other abominations. On the following morning (Friday) we passed through Llangollen, 'Sweetest of Vales', a spot of exquisite, surpassing beauty. All we could express as we sat in the car, gazing on its varying lines, was to cry "beautiful – beautiful".

We dined in the town, having first visited Plas Newydd, the famed retreat of 'the ladies of Llangollen', Llady Eleanor Butler and the Honorable Miss Ponsonby.

Christopher Hibbert, in his book *Wellington, a personal history* writes: 'His mother … thought him much improved upon his return from Angers (at age 18), she told two friends of hers, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, who were living together on terms of romantic friendship, totally isolated from society in a cottage at Llangollen in North Wales'. These ladies, described by Prince Puckler-Muskau as `certainly the most celebrated virgins in Europe', had already met Arthur Wellesley. He had been taken to see them by his grandmother, Lady Dungannon, who lived nearby, while still an Eton schoolboy, and he had been awkward in their company, disturbed by their semi-masculine attire and Lady Eleanor's top hat. But he was not awkward now, his mother assured them. `He really is a charming young man,' she said. `Never did I see such a change for the better in any body.' [139]

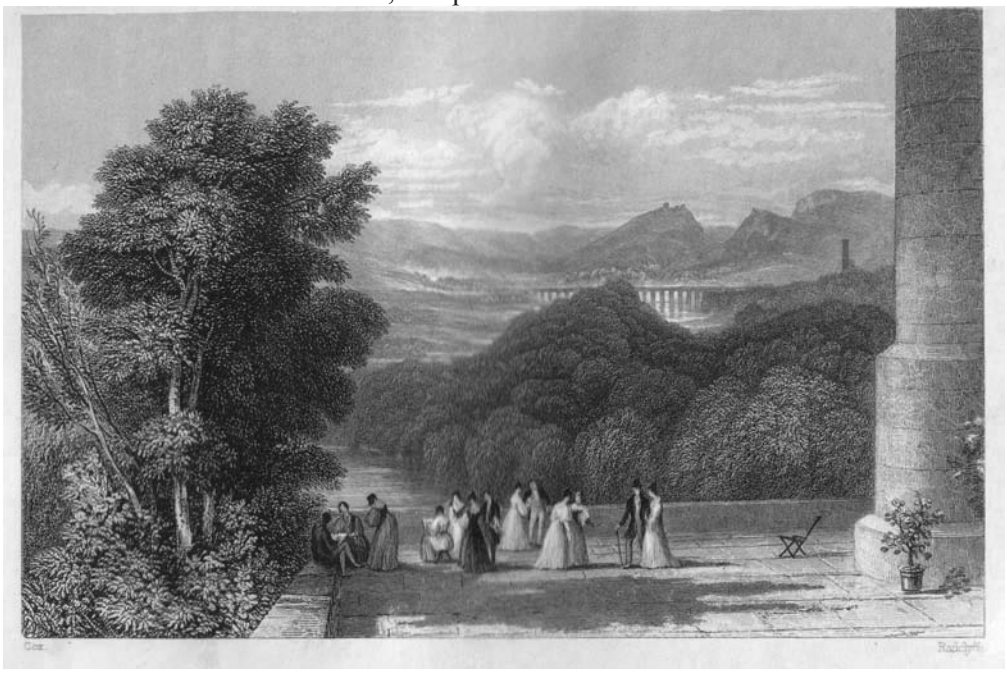
[138] Rhaeadr y wennol.

[139] http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/h/hibbert-wellington.html 23.4.07.

William Wordsworth wrote a sonnet to these learned and literary Anglo-Irish ladies, whose importance is recognised by feminists for being the first female couple in modern times to live more or less openly what we would call a lesbian lifestyle.

Anna Seward (1747-1809) in Poems on Female Friends (ll. 84-89) gives us:

Now with a vestal lustre glows the Vale,
Thine, sacred Friendship, permanent as pure;
In vain the stern authorities assail,
In vain persuasion spreads her silken lure,
High-born, and high-endow'd, the peerless twain,
Pant for coy Nature's charms 'mid silent dale, and plain.[140]



The Vale of Llangollen from the tower, Wynnstay Park

We then proceeded towards Cilhendre Park, about 5 miles from Chirk, where Captain Johnson had invited us to spend two or three days. We were most hospitably received by him and on the Saturday we had a long ride, partly through Brynkinalt, the seat of Lord Dungannon[141]. The Park is good and the view from the house very fine.

On Sunday we attended service at the Duddleston Chapel of Ease and were surprised at the text chosen by the clergyman. It was the 2nd of Ezekiel and the 6th verse: "And thou son of Man be not afraid of them neither be afraid of their words though briars and thorns be with thee and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house". It appears that the young man is a Puseyite or Romanist at heart, and has been performing the services in a very peculiar manner, and has done many things very strange to his parishioners.

The churchwardens (one of them Captain Johnson) had complained to the Bishop of his goings on and he had chosen this text from which he preached a very pointed sermon on Monday morning.

We practised Archery for an hour or two and then proceeded to the Warrens to shoot rabbits. Our party was Captain Johnson, Mr Morrell[142], Mr Kirks, Miss Amelia, myself, the gamekeeper, two dogs and a bag full of ferrets. The way they manage is this. The ferrets first have their mouths sewn up with needle and thread to prevent their killing the rabbits and afterwards going to sleep in the holes. They are then put in the holes, which they quickly enter, causing a dreadful commotion among the inmates who scamper out of

[140] http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh/seward1.html 23.4.07.
http://lists.village.virginia.edu/lists_archive/Humanist/v03/1127.html 23.4.07.
[141] Arthur Hill-Trevor, 3rd Viscount Dungannon. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viscount_Dungannon 14.5.07.)
[142] or Morrall.

the opposite holes. Now comes the tug of war. You must be a very good and quick shot to hit them for they run at a tremendous pace and are a hundred yards away before you have time to wink. When shot, they very often throw half a dozen somersets before they finally fall. The dogs then bring them to your feet and so the sport goes on ad libitum. We had a bad day, it being very wet. The rabbits would <u>not</u> come out. We only started about 8 or 9 – of these we shot 4.

After dinner, we were driven to the Gobowen station on the Shrewsbury and Chester railway, where we took train for the former place. We slept at Shrewsbury that night and in the morning walked about the town. It was market day, which rendered it very unpleasant as they have no open space in which they hold the market, but pen up innumerable bullocks, sheep, pigs, &c., &c., on the very pavements before the shops. I sincerely hope this is the only town in England that practises such abominations. It often leads to amusing scenes, I have no doubt, for while we were there we saw two strong powerful men in pursuit of a ram that had broken loose and was careering at a fearful rate over the small round stones that form the pavement. At length he was overtaken but, upon being seized, he made one desperate plunge which rolled both himself and the two men sprawling in the mud, to the infinite amusement of a street full of drovers, chaw-bacons[143] and others.

At two o'clock we set out on the top of the coach to Hereford. We had a miserable ride. It was bitterly cold on account of the biting wind and I scarcely ever remember spending such a miserable six hours. We were delighted when the coach rolled over the stones of Hereford and when we were seated at the comfortable fire, but I found the process of thawing very painful. On the morrow we again took coach to Chepstow, but under more auspicious circumstances. We rose at the unheard of hour of half past five to accomplish our journey and consequently saw the sun rise – a feat which I have not accomplished for many a day. We had a delightful ride all along the banks of the Wye, which we had to cross six times altogether. We saw Tintern – of course I need not dilate upon its beauties: that has been done many times and its features are familiar, through the aid of the pencil, to everybody.

We lunched at Chepstow and then set out for Bristol, where we arrived about three o'clock, Friday the 25th of October, and were most kindly received by my uncle, aunt and cousins of whom I must at present be silent, else I might make some members of the family vain.

[143] i.e. 'country clown or rustic fellow'. (*Chambers 20th century dictionary*, 1983)

Postscript

George Webb Medley

In 1853, George's sister Amelia married Barry Alexander Boyd Costin, who George visited at Bagshot and who was then in charge, at the age of 20, of Lambourne House, preparing young men for entry to Sandhurst. Very sadly, though, he was lost at sea (off Nova Scotia, bound, for some reason, for Portland, Maine) leaving her a widow in 1860 with 4 children, when she was 29.[144] Amelia, great great grandmother of the author of this commentary, subsequently sought consolation in Christianity, and died at the age of 55 in 1886, much admired by her Christian friends, as a lengthy obituary in *The Gospel Banner* testifies.

Amelia Cerf Costin, née Medley and EdwardBoyd Costin, c.1863

[144] *The Times* 5.3.1860, 9c; 6.3.1860 5a,8b,10e; 7.3.1860,9c etc.

George's brother John, who was George's clerk at the Stock Exchange in 1851, evidently felt in need of a more adventurous future and joined the army in 1856, as Cornet and later Lieutenant in Turkey, serving with the Land Transport Corps of the Turkish Contingent; then going to Australia where he ended up as Sub Inspector of police in New South Wales (Bourke, Mudgee and the Guloong Goldfields), from 1862 to 1881. He died in Grantham in 1902.

John Racker Medley c.1900

In the early 1850s, George's father, a widower since 1849, remarried, but was hit by business problems and was made bankrupt in 1854 (though quickly discharged) in connection with his activities as an underwriter in partnership with one, William Adam, with net debts around £5000[145].

George had continued success with the stock market and railway investments. He became Chairman of The Assam Railway and Trading Company and was also 'largely interested in several American railway companies'.

Whilst John made his mark in chess in Australia, George went on to take a leading role in the British Chess Association, being influential over the introduction of clocks in competitions; he was Honorary Secretary of The British Chess Association in 1862, 1866 and 1868, and its vice-president in 1872.

In 1871, at the age of 45, George married Maria Louise Selous, daughter of the artist Henry Courteney Selous and cousin of Frederick Courteney Selous the big game hunter and explorer.

Maria Medley née Selous

The S(e)lous family was of Huguenot origin, from Jersey. At that time George was living at Chislehurst in Kent where he served as a magistrate. He may have met Maria through her uncle, Frederick (Frank) Lokes S(e)lous (1801-92) who was a General Committee member of the British Chess Association and 'one of 12 leading players in London' in 1859. He was also Deputy Chairman of the Stock Exchange in 1853 and 1859-64, and Chairman in 1864-5.

Maria was wealthy in her own right and she and George moved to Winsford Towers, Beaworthy, Devon, also keeping 21, Park Street, London as a base for George's work.

Sadly, the couple had no children, but Maria found her fulfilment in commissioning a magnificent garden from Foster & Pearson of Beeston and installing their superb, state-of-the-art greenhouses. Though Winsford Towers was demolished in the 1950s, the greenhouses, together with the walled garden, have been recently restored, with a flair and dedication of which Maria would surely have approved. Anyone interested in gardens will greatly enjoy a visit: see www.winsfordwalledgarden.com

[145] *The Times*, 2.9.1854, p.12, col.c.

In addition to his activities in the Stock Exchange, George became increasingly interested in Economics and, in particular, the concept of Free Trade. He was an active committee member of the Cobden Club and a member of the Financial Reform Association. The authors of *A History of the Cobden Club*, 1939, write that he was '…an indefatigable writer on its behalf'. His publications included:

England under free trade.., 1881;

The Reciprocity craze, Cobden Club, 1881;

The House of Commons and its place in the state…. (an address to the Devonport & Stonehouse Junior Liberal Association), R.S.Smith & Co., Devonport, 1882;

The coming democracy, 1883;

The trade depression, Cobden Club, 1885;

Fair trade unmasked, Cobden Club, 1887;

The triumph of free trade…, Cobden Club, 1890;

The fiscal federation of the Empire (his resolution and speech at the Congress of chambers of commerce of the Empire,1892), Cassell & Co., London,1892;

The German bogey (a reply to E.E.Williams' *Made in Germany*), Cobden Club, 1896;

various British Chess Association publications, 1866-8.

He 'unsuccessfully contested East Surrey in 1880, and Devonport in 1885, in the Liberal cause'[146].

George died in 1898, aged 72, and his estate was 'sworn at £260,990 – 8s – 8d, the net personality being £252,038 – 5s – 7d'[147]. Maria set up a cottage hospital in the village of Halwill, near their Devon home, in his memory. She had it designed by the eminent architect C. F. A. Voysey and it was built in 1899-1900. When Maria died in 1919 she left £20,000 to fund The George Webb Medley scholarship at the University of Oxford 'for the promotion of the study of political economy'; the fund still provides prizes for M.Phil. theses in Economics.

George Webb Medley in fancy dress

[146] *Western Times,* 20.1.1899, p.8, col.4.

[147] *Western Times,* 20.1.1899, p.8, col.4.

A psychologist's perspective

This fascinating diary raises several questions for me as a reader, a distant relative, and as a psychologist. What could George Medley have been intending when he used Mr Sugar Face and Mr Gastric Juice as voices through which to describe his experiences? As Nigel Webb points out, there were examples in literature of the period of authors using 'deputy-diarist' characters in their writing. What possible functions did such characters serve for authors such as John Bunyan? Depending on which psychological ideas one draws upon, there is a variety of ways of explaining what possible function external 'voices'/characters might have.

Nigel Webb has suggested that perhaps Mr Sugar Face represented the optimistic and positive side of George's personality and Mr Gastric Juice his pessimistic and negative side and his anxieties.

Narrative therapists argue that human beings all hold multiple stories about their lives. These stories are created, by linking certain events together, in a sequence across a period of time and us making meaning of them (which forms the plot of a story). There are many stories by which we live our lives/relationships and the social context in which anyone is living will influence which stories are formed and what meanings are given to events. Thus the contexts of gender, class, race, culture are all powerful contributors to the plot of the stories by which we live[148]. Events that occur will be interpreted according to the plot that is dominant in a person's life at the time. The dominant stories affect not only the present but also have implications for future actions.

What can we learn from considering the context in which George Medley lived at the time of writing? In 1851, George was 25 years old. He had spent much of his childhood in Jamaica. How did he see himself? What stories did he have about himself and his identity? What influence had his ethnic heritage upon him and how was he affected by the fact the previously accepted moral order was being readily questioned (for example through the abolition of the slave trade)? Given the social context in which he had been brought up, he may well have had many clear social expectations laid upon him – chaperoning his sister on holiday; reading certain newspapers; joining friends in hunting activities and so forth. As a young gentleman he may have been expected to hide his emotions and anxieties in case they were perceived as signs of weakness. It may be that through the characters he created he was able to explore and question 'taken-for-granted' customs and expectations of someone of his age and social standing. He comes across as a young man who may have been exploring philosophical questions about morality, social conventions and their purpose. Through the voice of Mr Gastric Juice, George may have been able to articulate 'forbidden' and 'alternative' stories on the same subjects that he writes about from Mr Sugar Face's perspective. He may have been exploring what might be the preferred stories he would like to have about himself and the possible implications for his future behaviour.

There are many other psychological ideas which could be used to try to understand George Medley's use of these two interesting characters: it is hoped that the one possible explanation explored above will provokes thought and interest for the reader.

* * *

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Kate Saywood's efficiency in typing up the text of the diary from George Webb Medley's 'Stockbroker's Handwriting' is also greatly appreciated.

[148]Morgan, A.: *What is narrative therapy? An easy-to-read introduction*. Dulwich Centre Publications, Adelaide, 2000

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Also published by Legini Press (2006) and now re-published by IBTauris:

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Caroline Webb graduated in History from the University of London and read Italian and Art History in Cambridge and Verona. She has worked as a historical researcher and teacher.

Nigel Webb is the author and series editor of numerous educational books. He studied at the University of Cambridge and has worked as a teacher, both in the UK and in Tanzania. He is a direct descendant of Samuel Medley, whose diary was one of the inspirations for this book.

A Portrait of Mr Sugar Face
(Mr Gastric Juice refused to have his likeness displayed in this vulgar way.)

Price: £9.95

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